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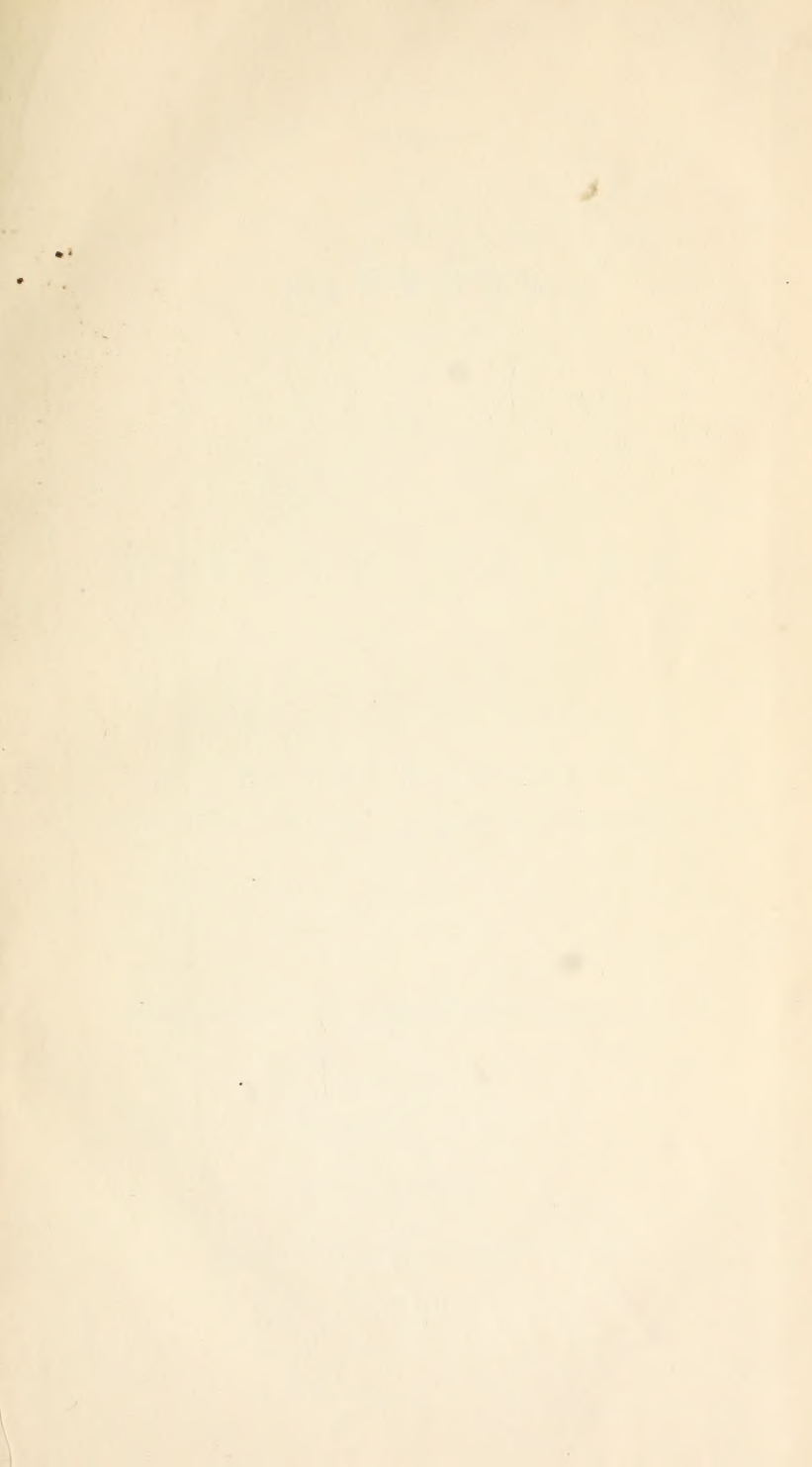


Williston

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HARMONY  
OF  
DIVINE TRUTH.

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BY SETH WILLISTON,

Author of a Vindication of the Doctrines of the Reformation, Revival Sermons, Discourses on the Sabbath, &c.

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*"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8: 32.*

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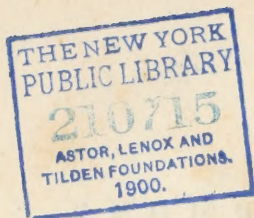
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# CONTENTS.

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INTRODUCTION . . . . .	5
------------------------	---

## PART I.

### TRUTH IN DOCTRINE.

ARTICLE I.	Being and attributes of God . . . . .	17
II.	Creation and providence . . . . .	39
III.	Moral government—perfection of the law . . . . .	51
IV.	Man's apostacy and entire depravity . . . . .	65
V.	Atonement for sin by the sacrifice of Christ . . . . .	82
VI.	Benefits of the atonement proffered to all . . . . .	100
VII.	All men naturally disposed to reject the offer of salvation . . . . .	110
VIII.	Regeneration a radical change, effected by the Holy Ghost . . . . .	125
IX.	Sovereignty of grace in regeneration . . . . .	153
X.	Divine purpose relative to the salvation of men . . . . .	167
XI.	Justification by faith in Christ—of grace, not of works . . . . .	182
XII.	Perseverance of the saints—grace and glory connected . . . . .	198
XIII.	Resurrection—general judgment—heaven and hell . . . . .	212
XIV.	Counsel and agency of God . . . . .	228
	Retrospect of Part I. . . . .	244

## PART II.

### TRUTH IN EXPERIENCE.

	General remarks on experimental religion . . . . .	261
ARTICLE I.	Disinterested benevolence . . . . .	267
II.	Complacency in holiness . . . . .	288
III.	Submission to the will of God . . . . .	297
IV.	Repentance . . . . .	308
V.	Faith . . . . .	323
VI.	Hope . . . . .	337
VII.	Humility . . . . .	347
VIII.	Spiritual hunger . . . . .	356
IX.	Spirit of forgiveness . . . . .	369
X.	Self-denial . . . . .	382
XI.	Thankfulness to God . . . . .	392
XII.	Holy meditation . . . . .	403
	Retrospect of Part II. . . . .	413

# PART III.

## TRUTH IN PRACTICE.

General remarks on practical religion	425
---------------------------------------	-----

### DUTIES TO GOD.

ARTICLE I. Worship—prayer and praise	428
II. Reading and hearing God's word	453
III. Sanctification of the Sabbath	464
IV. Public profession of godliness	481
V. Consecration of property to the Lord	491

### DUTIES TO MEN.

FIRST DIVISION.—General duties	509
I. Regard to the person of our neighbor	510
II. his property	511
III. his reputation	513
IV. his soul	517

SECOND DIVISION.—Relative duties	526
I. Duties of rulers and citizens	526
II. instructors and pupils	528
III. ministers and hearers	531
IV. husbands and wives	532
V. parents and children	536
VI. brothers and sisters	542
VII. masters and servants	544

THIRD DIVISION.—Personal duties	555
Men are bound to take care of their own persons, property, reputation, and souls	556
Personal attention to the interests of the soul indispensable	557
Every man is bound to be sober-minded, temperate, chaste, and industrious	559
Retrospect of Part III.	571

CONCLUDING REMARKS	582
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## INTRODUCTION.

It is becoming quite a common sentiment at the present day, that it matters not what a man believes, if he is but sincere. *As a man thinketh, so is he*, is not unfrequently adduced as furnishing scriptural proof of the correctness of the sentiment. This half quoted text, like that employed by Satan when he tempted the Son of God to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, is made to speak a language foreign from its true meaning. When written out, it reads thus: "For as he thinketh *in his heart*, so is he:" and the connection makes it evident that the thing intended by the passage was to mark the difference between the lips and the heart of the flatterer, for the sake of detecting his hypocrisy, and showing that his *heart*, not his lips, give him his real character. See Prov. xxiii. 6—8. But the language which this passage is very commonly made to speak, is to this effect: "Whatever a man thinks to be right, is right; whatever he believes to be truth, becomes so to him; be it what it may, his belief transforms it into truth; so that henceforth for *him* it will answer all the purposes of the most orthodox creed which he could have adopted."

Thus, according to this popular maxim, truth, in relation to God and the things of eternity, has no existence, except in a man's own mind; and, since it is manifest, that there are "many men of many minds," the truth must be multiform and contradictory. But is this correct? Is it possible that the truth should have such an unsolid foundation? Can it be either created or annihilated by a freak of the brain? What then could be the use of an inspired volume? (for I speak to them who acknowledge that such a volume exists;) was it not given to settle the grand question, *What is truth?* But if a man's belief be the thing which gives truth its existence, a revelation from God is useless; for without a revelation every man will believe something; and according to the foregoing maxim, his belief of this something, (no matter how inconsistent and false it was before he believed it,) immediately transforms it into truth.

But do the scriptures speak of the truth as if it were originated by man's belief? Do they not manifestly represent it as having an existence which is entirely distinct from this? How pointedly do they condemn those who believe not the truth, but who believe a lie in its room! Nor is there any intimation given that their belief, even their cordial belief of a lie, serves to transform it into truth, or to divest it of its baneful influence. 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12. When the divine teacher told his hearers, that if they should know the truth it would make them free, the truth was evidently supposed to have existence independently of their knowledge of it. Likewise, when he sent his

disciples to preach the gospel to every creature, the commission they received supposed the gospel to be true, whether it should be believed or disbelieved; else the disbelief of it would not have been threatened with so great an evil as eternal damnation. Mark xvi. 15, 16.

How it can be accounted for, that the term *truth* should have been selected by the inspired writers, (or rather by the Spirit of inspiration,) to distinguish the religion which they exhibit, from every other system in the world, if at the same time they had considered it as a mere moral chaos, made for our plastic hands to mould and shape into such creeds as should please every man's own fancy? It is worthy to be noted that the sacred volume makes a very copious\* use of this term, applying it to every department of religion. For itself, as an inspired book, it claims the honor of being called "the scripture of *truth*," and "the word of *truth*." Dan. x. 21. Eph. i. 13. Is not the Bible thus manifestly distinguished from the Koran of the Mahometans, and the Shasters of the Brahmins, and from every other book which sets up a claim to inspiration? The God of the Bible is called "the *true* God," his beloved Son is called "the *true* Witness," and his Holy Spirit "the Spirit of *truth*;" and why, except to distinguish Jehovah from idols, his Son from false Christs, and the Holy Ghost from Satan, and every other lying spirit? The *doctrines* we are required to believe, are denominated the *truth*, to distinguish them from the doctrines of devils, and from delusive errors of every kind; and the *belief* of these doctrines, when it is wrought in our hearts by the Spirit of God, is said to be *truth and no lie*, to distinguish it from a false faith which does not work by love. Also, that *conduct* which is required by the divine law, and which is the external expression of a heart conformed to it, is called "obeying the *truth*." 1 Tim. ii. 4. 1 John ii. 27. 2 John 4. "The church of the living God," when considered as a community, composed of men redeemed from iniquity, is called "the pillar and ground of *the truth*." 1 Tim. iii. 15. See also Isa. xxvi. 2. What an importance does it give to religious truth when we hear Christ Jesus witnessing this good confession before Pontius Pilate! "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto *the truth*." John xviii. 37. Surely that must be a thing of no small consequence, the establishment of which was the end of our Redeemer's birth, and the sole cause why he came into the world.

But what is *truth*? It concerns every one to know what the sacred writers intend by a word which they make so significant. Is it of such doubtful meaning that nothing can be determined by the use of it? We all understand that *truth* is the reverse of falsehood; that it implies *reality*, in contradistinction from that which is fictitious; the agreement of things with the representation made of them; or such a representation as agrees with their actual state. The scripture, in using this word to characterize the religion which it reveals, manifestly assumes the ground, that this religion is a solemn reality; that its doctrines, which claim our belief, are not fables, but facts; and

\* In John's two short epistles, both of which contain but twenty-seven verses, the word *truth* occurs ten times.

that those internal affections and external actions, which it requires, are such affections and actions as correspond with these facts, and are therefore themselves denominated the truth, "truth in the inward parts," and "truth wrought," or done, that is, reduced to practice. Ps. li. 6. 2 Chron. xxxi. 20.

By such a continual recurrence to this significant word, it would seem that *truth* is considered as that which gives to the religion of the scriptures all its excellency; so that, were it to be divested of this quality it would cease to be worthy of our regard. The circumstance, that the scriptures resolve into *truth* the whole which they teach on the subject of religion, is calculated to impress us with the sentiment, that religion is not made or unmade by men; that their belief or disbelief, though it may greatly affect their own well-being, does not affect the thing itself. Their belief does not make it true, nor does their unbelief render it false. What one doctrine of the scriptures is there, which depends on our belief for its truth? Surely the existence of God does not depend on his creatures believing that he exists; nor does the reality of his dominion over them depend at all on their believing in a divine government. Should the children of men believe themselves to be innocent creatures, uncontaminated with sin, it would not do away their depravity, nor replace them in their primeval state. It would still remain a fact, confirmed by every day's experience, that we are apostates. Nor will a disbelief of future punishment, to be inflicted on the impenitent and incorrigible, do any thing to annihilate that punishment. As well might one pretend that unbelief concerning a prison, erected by the state for the punishment of felons, would annihilate such a prison. It is true, that in view of the incredulous man it would be as though it were not; and his incredulity might be the very means of bringing him within its walls. But as soon as he is locked up there, he will be convinced that the prison had existence at the very time that he ridiculed it as a fiction. Whatever exists, is a reality, independently of its being believed.

But every one must perceive that religion depends not on the will of *man*, to give it its existence or character. Nor does it depend for either of these even on the *sovereign pleasure of God*. Whether a world of intelligent creatures should exist, or not, depended on his pleasure; but when such creatures are once in existence, it does not remain for him to determine whether or not to place them under law and the obligations of religion. These obligations are necessarily connected with their very existence. When we contemplate the intellectual system, made up of the infinite Creator and his rational creatures, with the relations necessarily subsisting between them, we perceive that our obligations to love him supremely, and our fellow creatures as ourselves, result from these relations. With such a universe there must be such a law, and such a system of religion, as are presented to us in the holy scriptures. The *truth* of this system did not originate with its explicit appointment, but its appointment is to be considered as the result of its accordance with the real state of the universe. It is therefore called "a *reasonable* service." Even where revelation has not shed its light, the obligation to the duties of piety are such as to take away all excuse for not glorifying God. Rom. xii. 1, and i. 20, 21.



Though divine truth exists independently of its being revealed, still the experiment has shown, that without an explicit revelation from God, this rebellious world, circumstanced as it is, would never come to the knowledge of the truth: "The world by wisdom knew not God." 1 Cor. i. 21. The heavens and all the visible creation declare the glory of God; but it is that declaration of divine glory which is made in the inspired word, which is honored as the means of converting the soul. Ps. xix. 1—7. If no other exhibition of the character and will of God, except that which is made in the holy scriptures, does actually bring men to know, love, and enjoy him, they well deserve to be prized above gold or rubies. The short period we spend in this world is probationary time. How important, then, on our first entrance into the world, that we should be apprised of the fact, and also be informed what the Lord our God requires of us, to render our term of trial a preparation for a blessed eternity. In the scriptures, this disclosure is fully made. Here every thing needful on the subject of religion is taught, and that with great explicitness. The principles of natural religion are made so plain, that children can understand them. And here is revealed an atonement for sin, the very thing with which sinners need to be made acquainted. The book of nature would not have disclosed this mystery of grace; but when the scriptures have made the disclosure, it is not difficult to see that this doctrine, which is peculiar to the Christian system, is in perfect harmony with the principles of natural religion.

The inspiration of the scriptures, will be taken for granted; for the object of this work is not so much the conviction of sceptics as the edification of believers, and the spiritual good of such as have become already convinced that the scriptures are clothed with divine authority. Not that the writer feels an indifference about the immortal interests of that class of his fellow men who still remain in doubt concerning the claims of the Bible. Nor is he without hope of being made useful to them. Should he succeed in showing that the scriptures contain a system of religion which is harmonious in all its parts, this may do something towards convincing such as have hitherto been sceptical, that they can not be the product of designing men. Whatever doubt any of his readers may entertain in relation to this matter, the writer himself has no fear that he shall be guilty of misguiding them, so long as the scriptures shall be his guide; for he can entertain no more doubt that whoever believes, loves, and reduces to practice the religion which is there inculcated, will meet the approbation of the divine Being, than he can doubt of the existence of such a being.

Before I proceed to exhibit my views of divine truth, it may be useful to make several preliminary remarks concerning the HOLY SCRIPTURES.

I. They are to be viewed as an *infallible standard*, by which every doctrine, affection, and practice pertaining to religion, is to be tried. That the scriptures claim to be so considered, can be doubted by no one who has read them. The book which we call the Bible claims to be "the word of God." 1 Cor. xiv. 36. 2 Cor. iv. 2. An apostle

tells us, it is "in truth the word of God."\* 1 Thess. ii. 13. If it be in truth the word of God, it must be infallible; for God can neither mistake nor deceive. One inspired writer declares that "every word of God is pure;" and another, that "the words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." What, short of the perfect purity of the scriptures, is asserted in this declaration of Wisdom: "All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them?" Prov. xxx. 5. Ps. xii. 6. Prov. viii. 8.

It is not strange that a book, asserting such perfect purity, should claim to be the *standard*, by which every thing relating to the subject of religion is to be tried and determined. If it is thus perfect, it may be well said, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isa. viii. 20. All that which is contrary to the word of God, whatever may be its pretensions to light, is nothing but darkness.

The scripture claims to be a *complete*, as well as a correct exhibition of the divine will. It is designed to make *the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*. 2 Tim. iii. 17. It professes to reveal all the truth which in our probationary state we need to be made acquainted with, in relation to God; his works of creation and providence; his justice and his grace; man's original and present state; his obligations to his Creator and fellow creatures; the way of escape from sin and ruin; and indeed in relation to every thing which concerns us as accountable creatures, both in our present and future state. To determine what is truth concerning these matters we must repair to the oracles of God. They are of higher authority than the writings of the fathers, the decrees of councils, or the creeds of the purest churches; they are the witness of God himself; and surely the witness of God is greater than that of man. 1 John v. 9.

II. The scriptures, being the testimony of the God of truth, *can not speak both for and against any particular doctrine*. Things which are merely circumstantial, may be different, yet not contradictory; for example, the posture of the body when we pray. This is not essential to prayer; the scriptures may therefore consistently speak of *standing, kneeling, and falling on the face*, to pray. There may be other modes of religion, for aught I know, which are similar to this. But where two things are of such a nature, that the truth of both is impossible, the scriptures, being pure truth, can not bear witness on both sides. They can say nothing against the truth. See 2 Cor. xiii. 8. Should the question, to be decided, relate to prayer itself, instead of the posture of the body, they could not take both sides. They could, with no consistency, affirm that prayer *is*, and *is not*, a duty. Should the question be this, Will all men be saved? the scriptures can not both affirm and deny. The same may be said of such questions as these: Is the Redeemer possessed of infinite attributes? Is the unrenewed heart entirely sinful? Is a radical change necessary, in every case,

\* Because Christ is called "the Word of God," there are some who refuse to give this name to the scriptures; whereas, it is much more frequently applied to them than to Christ. The phrase, *word of God*, in its original and natural meaning, refers to *what* he speaks, rather than to the *person* by whom he speaks.

to prepare men for heaven? Is there an infallible connection between such a change and eternal life? On these, and similar questions, the scripture must deliver its whole testimony for one side; else it will be as inconsistent and devoid of truth, as a witness who shall alternately testify in favor of two litigants, in relation to the same identical transaction.

On such controverted points as those which have now been suggested, the friends of truth can by no means grant, (what is often affirmed,) that "both sides have a *good deal* of scripture for them." The side which has, in reality, any scripture in its favor, has it all, and the other side has none. No one, who has a cordial affection for the truth, is willing to make a compromise, and have the Bible divided between contrary systems of faith, giving half to the one and half to the other. It is certain that the testimony of God's word, like the living child in the case submitted to the decision of Solomon, belongs wholly to the one claimant or the other. Nor is it less certain in this case than in the one alluded to, that it does not belong to that claimant who manifests a willingness to have it divided. What ought we to think of the man who should say, he believed the Bible said a good deal in favor of the God of Israel, and a good deal in favor of the gods of the heathen; that it said much in favor of the deity of Christ, and much against it; much in favor of future and endless punishment, and much against it? In fine, that it said much in favor of truth, and much, (or even any thing,) in favor of error? Would you think that such a man believed the Bible to be an inspired book?

III. The word of God is *harmonious in all its parts*. It contains a *system* of truth. To denote this, the various parts are often condensed into the singular number, and are denominated "the truth," "the gospel," "the doctrine of Christ," and the like. Man's depravity constitutes one doctrine, regeneration another, justification another. In this sense the Bible contains many doctrines and many truths. Yet, as in Ezekiel's vision, the many wheels which he saw were addressed as *one* wheel, to express a unity of design in all the events of providence, so here, to denote a system of truth, all the doctrines and truths of God's word are spoken of as making *one* doctrine, *one* truth, *one* gospel. *System* is essential to divine truth. Indeed it belongs to all the works of God. We can not lift our eyes to the heavens, nor look down upon the earth, without making this discovery. And can we believe God's word to be chaos? Matter might exist in a chaotic state, as it did when it was first originated; but truth must always have harmony, else it is not truth. To matter, God can communicate what philosophers call the attraction of *repulsion*, as well as that of cohesion; but not to the word of truth. If, between different passages or doctrines, there should seem to be a conflict, a patient and careful investigation will enable us to see that the conflict is but a *seeming* one. The tendency of all the true doctrines of God's word must be to support, not to destroy each other. Whatever creed we may have adopted, if we place full confidence in the scriptures, we shall come to this conclusion: That they contain a *system* of religion; that this system is true in every distinct part; and that, as a whole, it is perfectly harmonious. We shall also conclude that the whole weight



of scripture testimony must be in favor of this system, (whatever it is,) and in favor of every one of its parts. Though every passage of scripture can not be adduced in proof of each doctrine, because it says nothing about it, we may rest assured that there is not a single passage, when rightly understood, which stands opposed to the true system, or to any of its doctrines.

IV. Since the scriptures express the will of God, *their decisions must not be reversed either by the reason or feelings of men.* And yet we are never to act otherwise than as rational beings. Nicodemus exercised his reason in arriving at the conclusion, that Jesus of Nazareth was a teacher who came from God. It was altogether reasonable that the miracles he saw should convince him of the fact. When he had become convinced of the fact, that he was a divinely commissioned teacher, he still had employment for his reason to enable him to understand the doctrines which he taught. But it was now too late for him to reject his doctrines on account of their apparent incongruity with his reason; for this would have been to exalt human above divine knowledge. Had he made his own reason the criterion, he would at once have discarded the doctrine of regeneration, (a doctrine as fundamental to the gospel as any other,) for on its first announcement it appeared to him very strange and absurd. The sequel of the history of this Jewish ruler leads us to conclude, that by taking further opportunities to be instructed, he at length discovered a consistency and glory in that very truth at which his unsanctified reason seemed at first to revolt.

The case which has now been referred to, will serve to illustrate the province of reason in our researches after divine truth. Reason must first be convinced that it is God who speaks, and then it must be diligently employed in ascertaining what he says. Among all the books claiming to be inspired, reason is to decide which, if any, supports the claim. They who have become satisfied that the Bible fully supports its claims to inspiration, need now to employ their rational powers to understand its true meaning; not what it ought to have said, but what it *has* said. And to understand what it has said, we must examine the natural signification of the words, phrases, and sentences, in connection with the context, and such circumstances as are calculated to make us acquainted with the truth which the Spirit of inspiration intended to communicate. Much light is obtained by reading the whole of the sacred volume, and comparing the different parts, especially such as by their relation to the same subject serve to explain each other.

Our *feelings* are a still more unsafe criterion of truth; for they may be nothing but the feelings of depraved nature, which must necessarily be opposed to every thing that is holy. To a heart in love with sin, nothing can be more unpleasant than divine truth. Christ said to the Jews, "Because I tell you the *truth*, ye believe me not." That which should have induced them to receive him, was the very thing which led them to reject him. The truth which he told them must surely have been more worthy of their belief than error, but to them it was not as palatable. It is a very common fault that a doctrine is rejected, merely because it does not suit our depraved taste. In this way a

false character of God is often substituted for the true. Let such men as those spoken of by the prophet, who say to their teachers, "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us," only make their feelings the standard by which to form their creed, and it is evident that the character of *their* God will differ most essentially from that of the God of Israel.

In our entrance on this work, I repeat it, that I must strongly protest against that practice, which has landed so many in fatal errors, and even in infidelity itself, namely, the suffering of our *feelings* to set aside the plain testimony of the God of truth. His word is to decide on the character of our feelings; therefore these have no right to exercise such a censorship over those things which the word teaches, as to admit or reject them at pleasure. Who can say that the feelings, which we are disposed to make the criterion of truth, do not proceed from that carnal mind which is enmity against God? Should this prove to be the fact, will it not manifest our extreme folly that we ever placed such dependence on them?

"It is not our feelings," some will say, "on which we rely for guidance; but the Spirit of God dwelling in us." If it be indeed the Spirit of God, his testimony in your hearts, will agree with his testimony in the scripture; for he is "the Spirit of truth," and the scripture, being dictated by him, is "the word of truth." The Spirit of God would have all his motions in our hearts tried by what he has himself communicated in the written word; and they who do not make this the standard by which to try their feelings, expose themselves to be deceived by their vain imaginations, and by that lying spirit which worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience.

Some may say, "We are the church, the pillar and ground of the truth, and therefore are not exposed to err." But the purest church is not as perfectly free from alloy as the inspired word. This is the standard by which every denomination of Christians is to be tried, to determine how far it ought to be considered a part of that church, which is "the pillar and ground of the truth." The scribes and pharisees had a place in the Old Testament church; yet they were bitter enemies to the truth: Hymeneus and Philetus had a place in the New; and yet their doctrine did eat like a canker. 2 Tim. ii. 17. If any particular branch of this sacred commonwealth pretend to possess such superiority over the rest, as to consider itself to be exclusively *the church*, its claims must nevertheless be decided by the inspired word; and in case of a refusal to submit to this decision, its claims are proved to be utterly groundless. A true church can not be known by the most scrupulous adherence to its own creed and rules; but by its conscientious conformity to the word of God.

The reader is advertised, in the outset, not to expect every topic will be handled in this work, which is usually found in systems of divinity. It comes not within its plan to treat of the modes of performing divine worship, nor of administering the sacraments of the New Testament; nor to advocate any particular form of church government. This omission is not intended to imply that such subjects are of no importance; nor is it designed to criminate those authors who have given them a place in their systems; but as these things seem not to

be of the most vital importance to holiness of heart or life, they will be wholly passed over in the present work, which it has been the author's design, if possible, to render useful to Christians of every name. On the subjects that will be discussed, which, according to the writer's own views of gospel religion, are its weightier matters, it is his earnest prayer that he may be kept from turning aside to the right hand or to the left, for the sake of accommodating himself to the opinions of any "master of Israel," or to the creed of any particular denomination of Christians.\* At the same time, he is not without hope that the friends of truth of various denominations, who shall read this volume, will find these weightier matters exerting a greater influence to draw them together, than their differences in minor matters, to drive them apart.

That divine truth, which it most immediately concerns all men of every nation, and of every religious sect, to know, may all be comprised in three grand divisions, namely, *doctrinal*, *experimental*, and *practical*. "For true religion," says a late commentator, "consists of *doctrine*, *experience*, and *practice* ; and he who separates these destroys the whole."† By *doctrine* is meant the creed of the scriptures, or the truths to be believed ; *experience* is the religion of the heart, by which an experiment is made of the excellence of these truths ; *practice* relates to external conduct. It is the religion of the heart manifesting itself in suitable actions.

To each of these departments of religion, and in the same order in which they have now been mentioned, it is proposed to pay attention in the following work. Fundamentals pertaining to each will be introduced, and their agreement one with the other pointed out. Since a very special reason for undertaking this work, was a desire to render more conspicuous that *agreement* which subsists between the various parts of the Christian system, I have entitled it "The HARMONY of Divine Truth." This term belongs to music ; but is very properly extended to theology ; for, as in well performed music, so in divine

\* This remark is by no means designed to condemn the use of creeds. While so many different and contrary interpretations are given of the inspired word, they become a necessary means of ascertaining whether we are actually agreed in our belief of its fundamental truths. But our subscription to a formula of doctrines, does not give it the authority of an infallible standard. It does not make it proper, that we should consider ourselves henceforth under obligation to make the formula, instead of the Bible, the rule by which to regulate our faith or practice. No, the Bible is still, as much as ever, to be the supreme arbiter to decide every controverted point. If it is not so, why do we undertake to convert papists, and others whom we consider as involved in dangerous errors, by showing them that though their sentiments agree with their own standards, they disagree with the word of God ? If we avow the right to make our own standards our supreme rule in matters of faith, they will wonder why we deny them the same right. What, then, it will be asked, is the benefit of creeds ? They are a bond of union, as they serve to show, when we subscribe them, that we are so far agreed in our views of the word of God. It also implies a mutual covenanting to watch over, and submit to be watched over, in matters of faith, for the sake of guarding each other against a departure from that, which we are now agreed in believing to be "the faith once delivered to the saints." But in preaching the word, writing a book, or in any other way communicating religious instruction, the constant inquiry should be, What hath the Lord spoken ? what saith the scripture ? If, however, the preacher or author, in giving his views of the scripture, should so far deviate from the formula he has subscribed, as, in the apprehension of his brethren, to constitute dangerous heresy, he ought not to characterize them as severe and injurious, if they should proceed to exclude him from their communion.

† Scott's Pract. Observ. on 1 Pet. ii. 1—8.



truth, there is a real harmony. In vocal music there may be many voices employed at the same time, and yet there be no jar, because they all unite in the same sound. There may also be different tones, as well as voices, yet no discord, because they all unite to make a concord of sound. As the according tones and voices in singing, make one harmonious piece of music ; so do the different doctrines, experiences, and duties of the gospel, all sweetly accord, and constitute a harmony of divine truth.

There is no doubt a harmony between the different *doctrines*, which make the creed of the scriptures ; also between all those *graces of the Spirit*, which form the inward experience of the Christian ; and between all those *duties*, which when taken together, constitute a holy life. As there is an internal harmony in the ramifications which proceed from each of these principal branches, there is undoubtedly a harmony equally perfect between the principal branches themselves ; they must all grow from the same root, and therefore make one tree. That experimental religion which is genuine, must harmonize with the true doctrines ; for it is produced by them, and must of consequence accord with them. That practice, which is right, will agree with experimental religion ; for it is its most natural fruit. And since a correct practice is the fruit of those experiences, which are the product of truth believed, a correct practice must also have an intimate connexion with an orthodox faith.

After making two remarks, which have been suggested to my mind by an entrance on so interesting a subject as the harmonizing of divine truth, I shall proceed immediately to the main work, beginning with the doctrinal department.

1. There is great encouragement to engage in the study of theology, or divine truth. The subject is of all others the most important. It relates to the infinite God, and to things unseen and eternal. It opens a wider field for the employment of our expanding faculties than any of the human sciences ; and is perfectly superior to them all, inasmuch as it has a more direct tendency to purify the heart and make us wise unto salvation. Here is truth of the most interesting character, and it can be known with entire certainty ; since a divinely inspired book is put into our hands to guide us in our researches. No human science can be compared with this, either in its importance, or in the facilities it furnishes to arrive at certainty, by ascertaining what is the very truth.

Medicine and law occupy the attention of many of our educated men ; and these are no unimportant studies, since they not only improve the mind of the student, but qualify him to be more extensively useful. The study of divine truth is still more improving, and its practical influence is of superior importance. The *medical* student employs his mind in acquiring that knowledge which will qualify him to be instrumental in removing the diseases of the body. In acquiring this knowledge he is assisted by books ; but his authors disagree, and in the controverted points he has not, like the student in theology, an *infallible standard* to which he can repair. It is conceded that theological writers do not always agree ; yet their possessing a common standard renders an agreement practicable. By this means truth can be known, and that with certainty.

*Law* has a nearer affinity to theology than medicine ; for while the latter contemplates man as an animal, the former considers him as an accountable agent : but theology, in importance, ranks above the civil law ; since it has to do more immediately with man's immortal interests. It places him directly before the Supreme Judge, and seeks to influence him by the retributions of eternity. The law student has many valuable books to assist him in acquiring the knowledge of his profession ; but they do not afford him such effectual aid as the student in theology receives from that single volume, the Bible.

The study of medicine is confined to physicians, and that of law to attorneys ; but that of divinity need not, and ought not to be restricted to divines. The medicines of the physician may effect a cure on our bodies, while we are perfectly unskilled in his art ; and the attorney may successfully plead our cause, though we should remain ignorant of those principles of law on which his pleas are grounded. But the spiritual patient must himself be made acquainted with his disease, and the remedies which are administered, else they will effect no cure : for as his disease is of a moral nature, so it is with the medicines which are made use of for its removal. And that sinner, who employs the Son of God to plead his cause in the court of heaven, must himself understand the principles on which his Advocate grounds the pleas which he makes in his behalf. Nor let any man, even in the humbler walks of life, think the knowledge of divine truth is something beyond his grasp. Let him search for it as silver, and dig for it as for hid treasure, and he will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. Prov. ii. 4, 5.

2. Nothing can be more proper than prefacing and accompanying the investigation of divine truth with *humble prayer to God*. With his word in our hands we are nevertheless greatly exposed to err, because sin has blinded our minds. David, with the word of God before him, felt that he needed still further assistance, and therefore prayed, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." The Bible itself needs to be read prayerfully ; and every other book we read should be spread before the Lord ; and while it is read should be carefully compared with his word, that we may know what to receive and what to reject.

Let me earnestly intreat every one who shall conclude to read the work which is now before him, to undertake it in a *prayerful* manner. The subject, you perceive, is one of great importance. A mistake on a subject so important as this, may be of such a nature as to prove fatal to the interests of your soul. As soon as you have finished reading this introduction, if you have not done it already, let me hope that you will present the book before the Lord, and seek for his aid in its perusal. Ask him to put your heart into a frame to receive *all the truth* it shall contain, and to reject nothing except that which shall be repugnant to his word. To preserve your heart in this teachable frame you will need the Holy Spirit, whose aid is promised only in answer to prayer. Luke xi. 13. If you do not need the Spirit to give correctness to your opinions, it is certain that without his help you will never receive the truth in the *love* of it.

The improvement of my readers in the knowledge of revealed truth,

if I mistake not my own feelings, has been an object dear to my heart. It certainly has engaged many of my prayers. I trust they will not consider me unreasonable, when I request them to second these prayers which have been made on their behalf; and when I request them to implore the blessing of God to attend this book wherever it shall go.



# THE HARMONY OF DIVINE TRUTH.

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## PART I.

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### TRUTH IN DOCTRINE.

THE Bible contains a system of *Doctrines*. These are as true as the Bible itself, and one doctrine is as true as another; but they are not all equally fundamental to the religion it inculcates. The plan of this work will lead me to confine myself more particularly to the doctrines which lie at the foundation. These will be considered under distinct Articles.

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### ARTICLE I.

THERE IS ONE ONLY LIVING AND TRUE GOD, POSSESSED OF INFINITE NATURAL AND MORAL PERFECTIONS; AND THE JEHOVAH OF THE SCRIPTURES IS THAT GOD.

THE first truth which presents itself to our view, on looking into the volume of inspiration, or of nature, is *the existence and infinite perfection of God*. This truth is the basis upon which all others stand; for without it none of the rest could have had an existence. Had not this been true, there had been no religion either revealed or natural: for had there been no God to create, there would have been no creatures to adore him. But since it is an incontrovertible fact, that there is a dependent universe, it is certain there is a creating Power.

That something has always existed, is as demonstrable as that there is existence at the present time; for non-entity cannot originate being. It is easy to account for the existence of the world we inhabit, and all those which are spread out before us in the heavens, when once we

have adopted the sentiment, that there is a God, whose existence is without beginning, and whose ability both to plan and execute, are without any limits.

The visible universe, especially that portion of it which falls within our more immediate observation, while it is manifestly the product of unlimited skill and power, seems, in the most of its parts, to be wholly unconscious of its own existence; and in no part is there the least approach towards independence. "Every house," said the apostle, "is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God." The house, while unconscious of its own existence, displays such skill and power as are possessed by no being on earth, except man. It must, then, be correct reasoning to say, that the man who is the builder had an existence antecedently to the house he built; also that his antecedent existence is the cause why such a house exists at all. And do we not reason with equal correctness, when, from the existence of a manifestly dependent universe, in which are displayed infinite wisdom and power, we infer that there must be an infinitely wise and almighty builder; and that he must have been before the world was? Heb. iii. 4. Should the demand be made, How will you account for the existence of the builder of the universe, any more easily than for the existence of the universe without a builder? it may be replied by asking, Why do you always infer the existence of a builder on the sight of a house? Why do you not reason thus: "If I should undertake to account for the existence of the house by saying, it was built by some man, I shall still have to account for the existence of the man who built it; I may therefore as well stop at the threshold, and suppose the house to have existed independently of any cause beyond itself." Yet no man reasons thus in relation to the products of human skill and power. No one thinks of attributing self-sufficiency to an unconscious house, however great may be its elegance and convenience. Nor does any one attribute such a product of skill to the sagacity of a brute. We do not rest until we have found a cause adequate to the effect. In man we find it. But now we need to find a cause adequate to the existence of man, and of all the animal and vegetable tribes with which we are surrounded. And is it not just as evident, if we would rationally account for the existence of the world, that we must look for a cause beyond the world itself, as that we must do so in the case of the house?

But where, it may now be asked, shall we stop? The answer is plain; stop when you are carried back to that Being whose power is sufficient to give existence to the world. You can go back no further. That you must stop somewhere is certain. But you can not stop at the house, a thing unconscious of its own existence, without searching for its cause. You are irresistibly led back to man, its builder. Nor can you stop at *man*, who, though intelligent, is nevertheless as dependent as the house he builds. But when you are carried back to God, you can go no further in search of causes. In him you find a cause fully adequate to the production of all you behold. As his attributes are unlimited, they can not be dependent on any other being, either for existence or exercise. Here, then, must be the proper place to rest. The inquiry, How came such an infinite, all-sufficient, eternal Being, to exist? is going a step too far. That he does exist, and always has

existed, we know with as much certainty as we do our own existence ; and this is all we can know concerning this deep mystery.

The existence of *one* Infinite Being, is enough to account for that of the whole dependent universe : but myriads of finite beings would be wholly insufficient. That appearance of *system*, which is seen in the earth under our feet, and in the heavens over our heads, manifests a unity of design, and seems silently to tell us, that the whole frame of nature has but one builder. Concerning the unity of the Godhead, the *scriptures* are perfectly clear. They are no more explicit in declaring there is one God, than in asserting there is but one.

As there is but one being in the universe who is God, so *individuality* belongs to him, as much as to any other being in existence. Though he is a spirit, immaterial and invisible, this does nothing to prevent his individuality. Angels are spirits, but each has a separate consciousness, as much as if they were clothed with bodies. There are those that talk of a divine being, who divest their deity of that which is essential to every intelligent being in the universe, viz. individuality. They give to their deity the name of Nature, and evidently make him nothing different from the world itself. With such *conceptions* of a divine being, it is not strange they feel under no obligation to render him worship or obedience ; for, according to this scheme, he is no more a proper object of love, worship, and obedience, than fire and air, or any of the elements of which material bodies are composed. Nor would such a God be in reality any thing distinct from ourselves. There is no man, I am persuaded, that can feel himself under obligation to God, until he views him as an existence entirely distinct from himself, and from all the other beings in the universe ; just as much as one man is distinct from another. He is the author of all things, but they are no more a part of himself, than if they had been created by another hand. To different existences he has given different natures ; but no one of these, nor all of them taken together, constitute the divine essence. God existed before the dependent universe, and in as perfect a manner as he does now. To deny his individuality, confounding his existence with his works, is nothing better than downright atheism.

There are different names applied to the God of the scriptures ; but JEHOVAH is the name which is most peculiar to him. The idols of the heathen are called *gods* ; but concerning the object of Israel's worship it is said, that his name *alone* is JEHOVAH. Ps. lxxxiii. 18. Though this name is seldom found in the English Bible, it occurs with great frequency in the original language, and is rendered by the word LORD, commonly written with capitals, to distinguish it from the other Hebrew names which are translated by the same word.

Having seen that it is reasonable to believe in the existence of one God, one independent cause of a dependent universe, it concerns us to know where this God is to be found. In our Article it is asserted, that the Jehovah of the scriptures is that God. To satisfy every mind that this assertion is well founded, it is proposed, I. To give a concise description of the character of Jehovah, the God of the scriptures ; II. To show that there are conclusive arguments for the belief that he is the true God.

I. Let us look at the character of Jehovah, as we find it delineated



in the scriptures. In these sacred writings, very much is said concerning that great Being, whom they exhibit to us as the object of our supreme regard. He is every where represented to be absolutely perfect, both as to his *natural* and *moral* attributes, that is, infinitely great and good.\* There is nothing can be imagined necessary to constitute a being great and good, amiable and blessed, which they do not attribute to him in the most unlimited degree.

Those perfections of God, which he claims for himself, and which the scriptures ascribe or *attribute* to him, are usually denominated in theological writings the *divine attributes*. God is an infinite spirit, uncompounded and indivisible. His infinite perfections are all seen by himself at one glance. But with our limited minds we are obliged to take them apart, looking first at one, and then at another.

The distinction between *natural* and *moral* attributes is not arbitrary ; it is as well founded as that, which we have all been in the habit of making, between the *understanding* and the *heart*. Were we to say of a certain man, that he has a capacious mind, a great intellect, we should be considered as deciding nothing concerning the state of his *heart*, whether it be benevolent or selfish. Though in God *natural* and *moral* perfections always go together, still it seems entirely proper to consider them as laying a foundation for two distinct classes of attributes ; both of which will now be very briefly considered. Our attention will first be directed to the consideration of

**THE NATURAL ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.** These relate to his *greatness*, without distinctly bringing into view the holiness of his character. They are all infinite, or unlimited. "His greatness is unsearchable." Of this class of attributes, the following are the most prominent.

1. *Independence*. It is peculiar to God to have existence of himself, without receiving it from another. He is the only being in the universe who knows, chooses, and acts, independently of all aid or control. There are many and great disparities among other existences ; since some are inert and others have life, some are irrational and others are rational, some unholy and others holy ; but they are all, one as much as another, entirely dependent on him, while he is absolutely indepen-

\* Every thing relating to an intelligent being or moral agent, which does not directly bring into view his character as *holy* or *sinful*, is termed *natural* ; not in contradistinction from that which is *unnatural*, but from that which is of a *moral* quality. Intellectual as well as muscular strength is called *natural*. The *good enjoyed*, whether by brutes or men, by creatures or their Creator, is denominated *natural* good. *Moral* is a term restricted to intelligent beings, because they alone are capable of moral actions, i. e. of doing right and wrong ; and it is restricted to those properties and actions of theirs which are either holy or sinful. *Natural* good and evil are of the same import as happiness and misery, while *moral* good and evil are nothing different from holiness and sin. Natural ability to do good implies a capacity sufficient for it, and a moral ability, a disposition to do it.

These terms thus applied, being much used in theological discussions and sermons, it is important they should not be misapprehended. When we say that justice and mercy are among the moral, and not the natural attributes of God, let no one imagine that we mean to say that God is not *naturally* inclined to such moral excellencies as justice and mercy. And if we assert that sinners are under no natural inability to love God, this does not imply a denial of their entire depravity, nor of its being their very nature to go astray as soon as they are born. There is a nature to things which are purely moral, as well as to those which are physical. All the moral agents in the universe, considered as such, have their respective natures. 2. Pet. i. 4. Eph. ii. 3.

dent of them all. They could neither begin, nor prolong their existence, without his aid ; but if they were all driven back into non-entity, he would remain the same. Ps. cii. 26. "Who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?" Rom. xi. 35. If a creature can be found who has presented the least thing to God, which he did not first receive from the divine hand, let him exhibit his account, and he will undoubtedly be recompensed.

2. God is *eternal*. The period of his existence infinitely exceeds that of any other being. There is no other whose existence reaches back to an eternity past ; nor is there any other whose duration will be co-extensive with an eternity to come. He only is *from* everlasting to everlasting. Ps. xc. 2. There are other intelligences whose duration will never come to an end ; and yet the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, infinitely surpasses them in the extent of his duration. They will always inhabit or dwell *in* eternity ; but he will *inhabit eternity itself*, filling up this immeasurable duration at once. While we live by moments, his existence pervades an immensity of duration.

3. God is *omnipresent*. Every other being is limited as to place, so that he cannot occupy a new place, unless he leave the one which he before occupied. When an angel comes down to earth, he leaves heaven ; and when he returns to heaven, he leaves the earth. He is not in both these parts of the universe at once. But the Divine existence has no such limitations : "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Do I not fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." Jer. xxiii. 23, 24. God does not leave one part of the universe to go to another, but is equally present (as to his essential presence) in all parts at the same moment. We cannot go from his presence or flee from his Spirit, by ascending into heaven or descending to hell. Ps. cxxxix. 7, 8.

4. God is *omniscient*. There are no bounds to his knowledge. "His understanding is infinite." "The eyes of the Lord are in every place." "The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts." Ps. cxlvii. 5. Prov. xv. 3. 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. The divine knowledge extends not only to all parts of the universe, but to all periods of its existence, present, past, and future ; and is as perfect in relation to the most remote of the past and future events, as to those which are now passing. "They consider not in their heart," said God, "that I remember all their wickedness." But it is now true, and will always remain so, that he does remember all the wickedness and all the righteousness which have existed in his creation. If the Lord can search all the hearts in the universe ; if he will always be able, at every point of a never-ending duration, to know all that has ever transpired, and foresee all which will be disclosed by the revolving ages of eternity, truly his knowledge can be nothing less than absolute *omniscience*.

5. *Omnipotence* is another of the natural attributes of God. The power which the scriptures ascribe to God is without limits. It was a high provocation, of which the Israelites in the wilderness were guilty, when they set bounds to the power of him who brought them out of their house of bondage, and led them through the Red Sea :

"they limited the Holy One of Israel." Ps. lxxviii. 41. "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" is one of those unanswerable questions, of which we have many examples in the scriptures. It was not too hard for the Lord to originate a universe of material bodies and rational minds. Neither is it too hard for him to govern both bodies and minds agreeably to their respective natures, and in accordance with the counsel of his own will.

6. God is *incomprehensible*. No understanding, except his own, does now, or ever will have a full and comprehensive knowledge of his perfections: "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Job xi. 7. Of the existence of God there is as much evidence as there is of our own; and of his infinite greatness there is no want of proof: but *infinite* greatness, of necessity, admits not of comprehension by created minds. A line that has ends can never sound an ocean which has no bottom.

I have merely glanced at the most material of the natural attributes of God. I shall now consider,

**THE MORAL ATTRIBUTES.** These, it will be remembered, exhibit to us the *character* of God; they show us his *heart*. The moral, as well as the natural attributes, are of an unlimited extent. They can not be *perfect* without being unlimited. If a being, possessed of infinite natural abilities, is *perfectly* holy, he must be *infinitely* holy; if he is entirely benevolent, he must be so to an infinite degree. The infinitude of the natural attributes constitutes a capacity for infinite moral perfection.

Intelligent beings of every grade must be either holy or unholy, benevolent or selfish. No conception can be formed of any that do not possess one or the other of these characters. The Supreme Intelligence cannot be destitute of character. He must of necessity be either a good or an evil being. On this interesting point (more interesting than all others) the scriptures have not left us in the least suspense. On no point is their testimony more unequivocal, full and uniform. The being they reveal to us as the true God is holy—perfectly, yea, infinitely holy. They exclude from him every unamiable characteristic, and represent him as possessed of an excellence of character sufficient to eclipse, and as it were annihilate, all that which is found in creatures. They say, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." "There is no unrighteousness in him." They call him "the Holy One;" and declare, "there is none holy as the Lord;" that he is "glorious in holiness;" and, to give us an impressive idea of his underived and unparalleled holiness and goodness, they speak of him as the only holy and good being in the universe: "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou *only* art holy." "There is *none* good but one, that is God." The scriptures do not deny that clouds and darkness are round about him, which may often prevent us short-sighted mortals from discovering the wisdom of his designs; but they assure us that righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne—and, however thick the darkness may be which surrounds him, that in him there is none at all. 1 John, i. 5. Ps. xcii. 15. Hab. iii. 3. 1 Sam. ii. 2. Ex. xv. 11. Ps. cxix. 68. Rev. xy. 4. Mark x. 18. Ps. xcvii. 2.

It is not so easy to *class* the moral as the natural attributes. Each



of these, as eternity, omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence, is so different from the others as to convey a distinctive idea concerning the greatness of our Creator; while holiness, love, justice, mercy and truth, seem to be nothing but different modifications of the same moral excellence, displaying itself according to the variety of objects and occasions for calling it forth. Unless this matter be rightly understood, there is danger that we shall divide God's moral attributes into two opposite classes, the *lovely* and the *unlovely*. But when it is rightly understood, we perceive that if one of these attributes is lovely, they are all lovely; since they have a common nature, and are nothing but different streams flowing out from one and the same unmingled fountain. To make this matter more intelligible, let us take a concise view of each of those moral attributes, which I have just mentioned.

First. *Holiness*. This word describes no particular modification of moral excellence, but seems to comprehend the whole. Every intelligent being has a character which is either good or bad; if good, it is denominated *holy*; if bad, *unholy*, or sinful. When the scriptures inform us concerning any intelligent being, that he is holy, it is the same as to tell us, that the frame of his mind, or disposition of his heart, is as it should be; that it is of such a nature as to constitute the reverse of moral deformity. The scriptures apply the term *beauty* to moral objects; they speak of "the beauty of holiness"—of "the beauty of the Lord"—of the beauty of the Lord our God being upon us—and of his beautifying the meek with salvation, i. e. salvation from sin, which is moral deformity. 2 Chron. xx. 21. Ps. xxvii. 4; xc. 17; cxlix. 4. From these scripture expressions it appears that moral beauty consists in holiness, either derived or underived, preserved or restored; and that this term is used to describe all that is morally excellent in an intellectual being. That God is a being possessed of moral excellence to an unlimited degree, is asserted by those portions of scripture which declare his unspotted holiness; but it is not the province of these, so much as of some other portions, to give us a definite idea of the nature of this excellence. That this matter may be better understood, let us immediately proceed to the consideration of a

Second moral attribute, viz. *Love*. In one chapter the declaration is twice made, "God is love—God is love." 1 John, iv. 8, 16. This mode of expression, it is well known, has more emphasis than though it had been said, God is a loving or benevolent being. The word *love* is made much use of in the scriptures, to describe goodness of character, both in application to God and his creatures. The persons of the Godhead are described as loving each other, and as loving the children of men. Good men are characterized by their loving their fellow men, and also by their loving God.

The affection of love has two distinct branches. The first of these is *good will*, which is now more usually termed benevolence. This implies the existence of a desire (whether it be more or less intense) for the good of the object of its regard. If the love be disinterested, it is unbounded; its field is no less than the world, the whole universe of sensitive beings. It is drawn out towards every object susceptible of enjoyment, irrespectively of the character which that object may now possess. At the Saviour's birth, the angels gave glory to God in the

highest, for that pacific spirit and good will which he was then so wonderfully manifesting toward the children of men. This good will of God toward the race of Adam, did not contemplate them as worthy and amiable ; but, on the contrary, as ill-deserving and hateful. The most direct contrast of disinterested benevolence is *selfishness*. Though the Lord hath made all things for himself, he is at an infinite remove from being actuated by that contracted principle which we denominate selfishness. His regard to himself, does not exceed his worthiness to be regarded by all other intelligent beings, to whom he is made known.\* His benevolent regard to his creatures, the subjects of his moral dominion, is not counteracted, nor diminished by the least degree of malice, or pride, or unconcern for their happiness ; as appears by such declarations as these : “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.” “Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly.” “The Lord is good to all ; and his tender mercies are over all his works.” Ezek. xxxiii. 11. Ps. cxxxviii. 6 ; cxlv. 9.

The other branch of holy love is distinguished from good will or benevolence, by being called delight or complacency ; and this requires *goodness of character* to constitute an object worthy of its regard. God’s love of complacency is limited to those who possess a holy character ; to all such, in whatever world they are found, it extends, and in exact proportion to their degree of holiness. In this sense of the word *love*, “the righteous Lord loveth righteousness,” and that alone ; and “his countenance doth behold the upright,” while “the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.” Daniel was not only beloved of his God, but greatly beloved. Why was he greatly beloved ? Not because he was clothed in scarlet and had a chain of gold about his neck ; not because he was the first minister of state ; but because an uncommon degree of piety and integrity adorned his character. Ps. xi. 5, 7. Dan. ix. 23.

Love is as comprehensive an attribute as holiness, and yet more descriptive. It is as comprehensive, since there is no moral excellence, of which we can form a conception, that is not some one of its modifications : it is more descriptive, since it is an affection of heart of which we can form a more definite idea than of holiness. Christ taught us that all the law and the prophets were comprised in two brief commands, the one enjoining love to God, and the other love to men ; and Paul represented all the law to be fulfilled in one word, and that one word was *love*. Such representations assume the ground, that any being, whether Creator or creature, who is possessed of a loving or benevolent spirit, in distinction from malice, selfishness, or indifference, has in his heart the whole of that good treasure, from which every thing spiritually rich and excellent can be drawn forth, as occasion shall call for it. Such benevolence characterizes all the inhabitants of heaven ; but the God of heaven possesses infinitely more of it than all the rest. His benevolence has originated theirs, and continually supports it. It is the benevolence of God which renders heaven a world of glory ; and every thing of the same nature on the earth, is to

\* See more on this subject under the next Article.

be traced up to the same inexhaustible source. I proceed to the consideration of the next moral perfection.

Thirdly. *Justice* belongs to this class. This is that modification of *benevolence* which prevents our wronging others, and prompts us to give to all that which is equal and right. It is applicable to our commercial dealings, as appears by that statute which we find in the law of Moses: "Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin shall ye have." Levit. xix. 36. It is still more applicable to governmental concerns. Wisdom, in commending herself, says, "By me kings reign, and princes decree justice." It is in connection with the account of David's reign over all Israel, that we are told he executed judgment and justice to all his people; that is, in the administration of the government entrusted to his hands, he treated his subjects according to their respective characters; he neither condemned the innocent, nor cleared the guilty. And it is in view of the moral government, which God exercises over his accountable creatures, that justice is attributed to him. As a God of holiness, he necessarily possesses entirely different feelings towards holy and unholy creatures. If therefore he has any government at all, it must be of a character to accord with such feelings, and must serve to manifest them. It must require holiness and forbid sin, require benevolent feelings and actions, and forbid those of a contrary nature. In correspondence with such enactments his government must be administered, in order to entitle him to the character of a just Ruler. And has not this been the spirit of his government and of its administration? It has been such as fully to entitle him to be called "the just Lord," and "him that is most just." He accepteth the persons of none, no not of princes; nor regardeth the rich more than the poor; but always has both his feelings and decisions in exact accordance with the character of his subjects. He never condemns the righteous, nor does he ever clear the guilty. Far be it from him, who is the Judge of all the earth, so to administer his government, that the righteous should be as the wicked. Zeph. iii. 5. Job xxxiv. 17—19. Ex. xxxiv. 7. Gen. xviii. 25.

Fourthly. *Mercy* is one of the moral perfections of God. A disposition to pity and relieve the wretched, though their wretchedness may have been the fruit of their own folly, is an amiable trait of character wherever it is found. In Jehovah, the God of our salvation, it is found in the highest possible degree. This is proved by scripture declarations, and by facts which speak louder than declarations. The scriptures declare, and that with great frequency, that "God is merciful," and "of great mercy," "plenteous and manifold in his mercy;" that he has "tender mercies," and "a multitude of tender mercies;" and that "his mercy is from everlasting, and endureth forever." Nor do they merely declare that he has a merciful heart, and feelings of compassion, but refer us to facts which have developed these feelings, and proved their reality. They tell us not only that his heart is full of mercy, but also that the *earth* is full of it, that is, of its displays. How could the Most High have given greater proof of the mercifulness of his nature, than to have selected our guilty, wretched world, as a theatre for the display of it? Do you ask what mercy he has shown to our revolted world; I answer by asking, what could he have done



more? Creatures of our character live on mercy every moment. But passing by every common favor, let me entreat you to turn your eyes to the cross, and contemplate that expensive provision which he has made for our redemption from iniquity and ruin. Contemplate this as you ought, and you will ask for no additional proof that God is merciful.

Fifthly. *Truth* is a moral attribute. An utter aversion to falsehood, and a disposition to represent things as they really are, accompanied with a strict punctuality in the fulfilment of engagements, form an essential characteristic of a good being; and this characteristic is denominated *truth*. Among those attributes, which constitute the moral perfection of Jehovah, truth holds a conspicuous place. He is not only called "a God of truth," but is said to be "abundant in truth," and a "God that can not lie." As he can not be deceived, so he can not practise deceit. His truth, when displayed in the fulfilment of his promises, is called *faithfulness*; and this is said to *reach to the clouds*, to be *established in the very heavens*, and to be that which he will *never suffer to fail*. Deut. xxxii. 4. Ex. xxxiv. 6. Tit. i. 2. Ps. xxxvi. 5; lxxxix. 2—33.

The attributes which I have now described are sufficient, when well understood, to make us acquainted with the holiness of God. Other shades of character might be exhibited, but it is unnecessary to mention further particulars.

*Blessedness* is not so properly one of God's attributes, as the happy result of them all. He is not only called "the blessed God," and "God blessed forever," but he is distinguished from all other beings in the universe by being called THE BLESSED. 1 Tim. i. 11. Rom. ix. 5. Mark xiv. 61. In respect to holy *enjoyment*, the Supreme Being differs as much from all his creatures, as he does in the greatness of his understanding and the goodness of his heart. Both in degree and duration his blessedness is unbounded. All the means of promoting it are in his own power, since he is a God in whom all fulness dwells. The infinite, eternal, and unchangeable felicity of the divine mind, is as pure as it is great; and must therefore be regarded by every benevolent being as a good of immense value.

Let me now turn your attention to the *harmony* which this Article has exhibited as existing between the divine attributes. Among them all, no discord can be found. It is certain none can be found among those of the class termed *natural* attributes. These are faculties or capabilities, such as are necessary to render an intelligent being as great as possible; they are therefore all of them described as unlimited. *Infinity* is applied to the place and duration of God's existence; also to his knowledge and power. He fills immensity, inhabits eternity, knows all things, and can do all things. Had he been represented as eternal, but not omnipresent; or as omniscient, but not omnipotent; there would have been an infinite disproportion in his attributes: but now they are completely harmonious. His ability to plan and to execute are equally unlimited.

Between the *moral* attributes, the harmony is no less apparent, nor any less perfect. God is infinitely holy in his nature, and "holy in all his works." To him there belongs no unholy attribute nor unholy

work. He has infinite love ; nor has he any attribute of a contrary nature. That love, which comprehends the whole of his moral perfection, is differently denominated, according to its particular displays. When exercised towards creatures susceptible of enjoyment, irrespectively of their character, it is called *good will*, a word of the same import with *benevolence*. When it is exercised towards good characters, as such, it is often distinguished by being termed *delight*, *favor*, and the *light of his countenance* ; each of which expressions is of the same import with *complacency*. Towards the character of selfish creatures, infinite benevolence must feel a total aversion ; and this aversion is expressed by such words as *hatred*, *displeasure*, *abhorrence*, and the like. In consistency with an abhorrence of their character, God desires their happiness, so far as it can be promoted, and yet not interfere with a greater good : and this desire for their happiness is called *compassion*, *grace*, *mercy*, &c.

Is there not a sweet harmony between these varied exhibitions of Jehovah's character ? Do we not intuitively discover a harmony between his extending his benevolent regard to all, and his restricting the love of delight to holy characters ? If holiness is lovely, and sin hateful, a holy God must love the one, and hate the other. Never was a discord in music more apparent, than that which would be made in theology, by supposing that Grabiël and Satan, with characters so totally diverse, should both of them be objects of divine complacency.

Those attributes which, at a first glance, seem to possess discordant properties, are in the light of revealed truth seen to be harmonious. "Mercy and truth have met together ; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Ps. lxxxv. 10. Vindictive justice, which calls for the destruction of transgressors, and mercy, which pleads for their forgiveness, make no discord. Punishing justice and pardoning mercy are not the same thing ; but they resemble those different tones in music which unite to make a concord of sound. Mercy acknowledges the claims of justice, and by means of an atonement she adds new lustre to that stern attribute, at the very time she displays her own milder glory.

As there is a very discoverable harmony between the attributes belonging to the same class, I think it is no less apparent between those which belong to the different classes. Hence it is, that there are cases where it is difficult to determine to which class we are to assign an attribute ; whether to consider it as belonging to the natural or moral class. The truth is, there is such an entire harmony between God's natural and moral perfections, that some of the attributes are of a *mixed* character, partly natural and partly moral. This appears to be the case with wisdom, immutability, and condescension.

*Wisdom* is a mixed attribute, having omniscience and perfect benevolence for its component parts. It comprises knowledge to discover all the means necessary to accomplish the best end, and a heart benevolent enough to choose and adopt those means. The divine understanding is never employed in wicked devices, though as a mere natural attribute it is capable of this ; but is always employed in devising good, and the most eligible methods of accomplishing it. See Rom. xi. 33. 1 Cor. i. 21. Eph. i. 8, and iii. 10.

*Immutability* is a mixed attribute. Eternity, ubiquity, omniscience and omnipotence are necessarily incapable of augmentation or diminution, and are therefore unchangeable. So far immutability is a natural attribute. But when God is spoken of as incapable of the least change in his holiness, goodness and truth, his immutability is represented to be a moral excellence. And this is the representation which is made in the following passages: "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." "Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie," &c. Mal. iii. 6. Jam. i. 17. Heb. vi. 18. Immutability, in the most absolute sense, belongs to no being in the universe besides the all-sufficient God. This may be considered as the crowning attribute, because its province is to give a perfect stability to all the rest.

*Condescension* is also a two-fold attribute, compounded of greatness and kindness. In Jehovah it is unsearchable greatness and majesty stooping infinitely low. Humility, since it implies a sense of dependence and of comparative insignificance, is not an attribute of God; but his unbounded condescension makes it evident, that he possesses nothing of that haughty spirit which is the opposite of humility. This attribute was celebrated by Elihu, when he said, "Behold God is mighty, and despiseth not any;" and by David when he said, "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly;" and by God himself, in the following passage: "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Job xxxvi. v. Ps. cxxxviii. 6. Isa. lvii. 15. That a being so great and exalted, should hold such intimate communion with creatures so insignificant and unworthy, is very affecting. It throws around the throne of the Most High an ineffable glory. It is condescension without degradation.

No instance can be pointed out, where one divine attribute makes war upon another. Omnipotence, considered as a natural attribute, could do infinite mischief, could destroy all good; but it is always employed in doing good, in accomplishing that which wisdom decides is best to be done. It is therefore with propriety called a "glorious power." While it terrifies the wicked, it excites the confidence of the holy part of the creation.

Those who have attended to the distinction which has been made between the two classes of divine attributes, must readily perceive that it is the *moral* attributes which give a lustre to the natural. The moral perfection of God is that which imparts beauty and glory to his unsearchable greatness. So he views the matter himself; for when Moses besought him to show him his glory, he returned him this answer, "I will make all my *goodness* pass before thee;" implying that his glory consisted in the goodness of his nature. Could infinite natural attributes be divested of goodness, there would be nothing in them glorious. The God of Israel conceded, that if his people found *iniquity* in him, they would have had some justifiable reason for having gone far from



him. Jer. ii. 6. By the psalmist he called on them to praise his great and terrible name, because it was *holy*; and to give thanks to him because he was *good*, and because his *mercy* endured forever. Ps. xcix. 3, and cxxxvi. 1. Natural attributes are either desirable or undesirable, according to the *character* of the being who possesses them. It is because the infinite natural attributes of Jehovah are wholly under the direction of goodness, that they are ineffably lovely and glorious.

Thus have we seen, that various portions of scripture combine their testimony in establishing the point, that there is one God, infinite in greatness and goodness: and such greatness and goodness they ascribe to Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews. Every man who has read the Bible knows that a multitude of other passages stand ready, if called upon, to testify to the same point; and that not a single text can be found to bear any counter testimony. Every verse in the Bible does not assert the being and perfections of God; for there are verses and chapters, and even one entire book,\* in which no name or title of the Supreme Being is found; yet in this very book his hand is clearly seen, and his glory strikingly displayed.

I hardly need to say, that the mere silence of a text in relation to any point of doctrine, amounts to no proof against that doctrine. As a thousand witnesses who testify nothing relative to a certain fact, will not put to silence one witness who declares he saw it take place; so a thousand texts, which say nothing concerning any particular article of doctrine, will not set aside one single text which asserts its truth. I wish this remark to be considered as one of general application, and hope it will not be lost sight of, either by the writer or his readers, through the whole work. That position, which was assumed in the Introduction, namely, *that the scriptures, being the testimony of the God of truth, can not speak both for and against a doctrine*, needs also to be kept in remembrance. These inspired writings can not bear any counter testimony to this most fundamental truth, namely, the existence and unity of God, and his infinite perfection, both natural and moral. We are aware, however, that on this very article the scriptures are thought by some to deliver contradictory testimony. It is objected,

First. That while many passages declare that there is but *one* God, others are found which tell us there are *three*. The scriptures, we acknowledge, speak of the one living and true God as existing in a manner mysterious and incomprehensible, so as to contain in himself a plurality of subsistences; or so as to possess a kind of *plural unity*. We know that the God of the Bible is represented as saying, "Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness." And when this was done, it is thus recorded: "So God created man in *his* own image." When these passages are compared, we learn that the *plurality* is not such as to destroy the *unity* of the Godhead. By means of other passages we learn that this plurality is a *trinity*. "There are *three* that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." 1 John, v. 7. The Savior commanded his apostles to baptize their converts in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of

\* The Book of Esther.

the Holy Ghost. Matt. xxviii. 19. In blessing the Christian church, instead of repeating the name of the LORD, (or JEHOVAH, as it is in the Hebrew,) three times, according to that form by which the sons of Aaron blessed the church of Israel, the apostle implored on them "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost." Compare Num. vi. 22—26, with 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

It is acknowledged that these, and similar representations, occur with considerable frequency; but we aver that there is nothing in them which is repugnant to the unity of God. In the apostolic benediction, it is the blessing of *one God* which is implored for the church. It is in the name of *one God* that we are baptized, though this one God is declared to be the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And the three that bear record in heaven, are expressly declared to be *one*. There is nothing in the trinity which the Bible reveals, and in which Christians, even trinitarian Christians believe, that has any real resemblance to the polytheism of the pagans. Between the persons of the Godhead there is no difference in their attributes. Each is eternal, omniscient, almighty, and infinitely holy. They are one in their supreme object, one in counsel, one in affection, and even one in essence; since the three constitute but *one being*. The doctrine of a *triune* God, as it is revealed in the scriptures, appears to have no tendency to lead us to polytheism and idolatry. They, who are the most devoted to the service of the God of the scriptures, have a perfect abhorrence of idols.\*

Secondly. It is said, while some portions of scripture speak of God as absolutely knowing all things, others *limit his knowledge*. The pas-

\* I have just above spoken of the *Persons* of the Godhead. There may be some, even among the orthodox, who will object to the use of this word. It seems to be needed, however, to distinguish the sentiments of trinitarians from what has been called the Sabellian heresy. And I would ask, whether the use of the word is not justified by what we find in the scriptures? Paul speaks of the *person of Christ*, and of the *person of his Father*, of whom he was the express image. 2 Cor. ii. 10. Heb. i. 3. Here, then, we have scripture authority for calling the Father and the Son *persons*; why, then, shall we not apply the same word to the Holy Ghost? Words, which serve to distinguish one man from another, are made use of to distinguish between the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit. Take a few examples: "For through *him* we both have access by one *Spirit* unto the *Father*." Eph. ii. 18. "And *I*, (i. e. the Son,) will pray the Father, and *he* (i. e. the Father) shall give you another Comforter, that *he* (i. e. the Holy Ghost) may abide with you forever. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the *Father* will send in *my* name, *he* shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance." John xiv. 16, 26. "And when the Comforter is come, whom *I* will send unto you from the *Father*, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, *he* shall testify of *me*." John xv. 26. "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if *I* go not away, the *Comforter* will not come unto you: but if *I* depart I will send *him* unto you. And when *he* is come, he will reprove the world of sin," &c. John xvi. 7, 8.

In these scriptures we perceive that nouns and pronouns denoting distinct personality are applied to the three subsistences in the Godhead. We also perceive that personal acts are attributed to each of them. And to prove that there is something answering to personal identity, the three are represented as having each his respective work;—and yet as all acting in perfect concert to accomplish the same grand object, the redemption of lost men. The Son departs to make room for the coming of the Spirit; who, though an omnipotent agent, is said to be sent both by the Father and by the Son. At another time, the Son is said to be led and driven by the Spirit. See Matt. iv. 1. Mark i. 12. While the language of these quotations, and of many other passages which might be introduced, naturally leads us to contemplate something in Jehovah answering to distinct personality, there is enough in the scriptures to hold us back from embracing *tri-theism*, or the doctrine of three distinct and separate deities, whose union is by accident, rather than by nature.

sages which declare his omniscience are numerous, and need not be quoted. Of those which have been thought to limit his knowledge, I will quote one or two of the most distinguished: "They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew it not." "They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind." Hos. viii. 4. Jer. xix. 5. It requires but a slight attention to these passages, to satisfy any one, that neither of them intimate an intellectual defect in the Most High, or any want of the most perfect knowledge of events past or future. Both of them clearly teach one and the same thing, namely, that the conduct complained of was abhorrent to his feelings, and was therefore done wholly without his approbation. *Knowledge* is applied to the heart as well as to the understanding; and when it is so applied, it expresses approbation or complacency. In the first Psalm it is said, "For the Lord *knoweth* the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish." Here it is manifest, that the Lord's knowledge of the way of the righteous, in distinction from the way of the ungodly, relates to his *heart*, not to his understanding. The same is true of the passage where Christ is represented as saying to hypocrites, in the day of judgment, "I *never knew* you."

Thirdly. It is objected, that the scriptures make very discordant representations concerning God's *unchangeableness*; that while some passages speak of him as always of one mind, and incapable of so much as the shadow of a turning, others represent him as having great changes and frequent turnings. Of those which are thought to belong to the latter class, the following are some of the most prominent: "And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." "Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king; for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments." "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not." Gen. vi. 6. 1 Sam. xv. 10, 11. Jonah iii. 10. That these texts present a seeming difficulty, we do not deny; yet I am persuaded that a careful and candid attention to it, will effect its removal. In seeking to obviate the objection, I remark,

1st. Those passages which inform us that God is always the same, without variableness or shadow of turning, were never designed to impress our minds with the belief, that divine perfection consists in an apathy, which implies a sameness of feeling towards moral objects of a different character. It is essential to the very nature of a holy and benevolent God, that he should take complacency in holy beings, and their consequent happiness, in distinction from taking complacency in the sin and misery of the unholy. The unchangeableness of his character is an eternal security for this uniform difference of feeling towards objects so totally diverse. I proceed to remark,

2dly. That the passages which represent God as being grieved at what has taken place; as repenting of what he has done, and as apparently altering his plans, do not imply, either that his mind has become unhappy; that he wishes he had done otherwise; or that he



has now struck out a new plan, different from his original calculations. "As for God," said one who was guided by the Spirit of truth, "his work is perfect." This is the view which God entertains of his own work. When the great work of creation was accomplished, it is said, "God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good." He saw nothing he wished to alter. There was nothing deficient; there was nothing redundant. But is it still true that the work of God is perfect? Is it still true that he sees nothing deficient or redundant? Is there not now very much that he wishes to alter? Here arises an important inquiry; Is God as well pleased with that system of *events*, which have transpired and are now transpiring, as he was with that system of creation, which by his power he brought out of nothing? To give a proper answer to this important inquiry, it is necessary that we make a distinction between an event, when considered by *itself*, and when considered in *its relation to the whole system*. The work of creation and providence will be more particularly considered under the next Article; but I cannot fully meet the present objection, without anticipating some of the remarks which belong to the subject of providence. The scriptures lead us to view all events, of every character, and by whatever instrumentality they are brought into existence, ~~as~~ being so directed and controlled by God, the supreme Agent, as to constitute *one system* of events; and this system is his providence. Viewed as an aggregate, he has no less complacency in it than he had in the work of creation, when on the seventh day "he rested from his work and was refreshed." We have not the least reason to believe, if God were to begin the work of providence anew, and do it all over again, that he would discover any place where he could make an improvement, or where he would wish, *all things considered*, to make the slightest alteration. "Nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it," which would in the least degree better it. Eccl. iii. 14. When he looks at these events in all their connexions and final results, he sees the wrath of man and the malice of devils praising him, and the remainder of their wrath and malice he will effectually restrain. Ps. lxxvi. 10.

I have already intimated that this subject requires a distinction to be made between events in *themselves* considered, and *all things* considered. To say, that God is well pleased with his *whole* system of providence, comprehending events of every sort, is to do him honor: but should we hence infer that he is equally pleased with good and evil agents; or that the misery of hell is, in itself, as pleasing and gratifying an object to him as the blessedness of heaven, it would be a high impeachment of his character. Who does not see that we give honor to the God of Israel, when we express our confidence in the wisdom and benevolence of that manifestly concerted scheme of providence, by which he brought his people into Egypt? We may well say, as for *this* work of God, it was perfect. So it was viewed by Joseph. See Gen. xlv. 5—7. And so God himself viewed it. But if, because the scheme, as a whole, was perfect, we were to say, that God must have looked with equal complacency on each individual agent and event, which made a part of it; implying that he must have had the same delight in the envious and murderous brethren, as in the object of their

envy; or that he must have been as much gratified with the anguish of Jacob's heart, when he exclaimed, "Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces," as when he said, "Joseph my son is yet alive," we should entirely misrepresent the divine character.

In pointing out the entire difference of feeling which God has towards good and bad characters, also towards the happiness and misery of his creatures, his word is remarkably explicit. If I mistake not, it is the strong expression of this *difference of feeling*, which is the very thing that has given rise to the objection now before us. In each of the three passages which were introduced at the head of the present objection, as being among the most prominent which are thought to lend it support, *repentance* is ascribed to God. In one of them he is said to be grieved at his heart; and in all of them is he represented as changing the course of his conduct, in view of changes which were seen to take place in his creatures. Whenever men are said to repent of what they have done, it always implies a change of feeling towards their own character and actions. But since the character of God is unchangeably good, and all his works are done in wisdom, repentance, when it is attributed to him, however forcibly it may be expressed, must always be understood to refer to his altered feelings towards the character and conduct of his mutable creatures. While man remained innocent, God had complacency in him; but when he became a rebel, he abhorred the creature which his own hands had formed; and this abhorrence he expressed in very emphatic language, by declaring it repented him that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. Whoever, since man's apostacy, whether our first parents themselves, or any of their sinful posterity, have returned unto the Lord, he has repented of the threatened evil and returned unto them. But does not the repentance which is attributed to him in both these instances, very clearly imply that his holy nature is unchangeably the same? Man, while innocent, is delighted in—he becomes an apostate, and is abhorred—he returns to allegiance, and again becomes an object of delight. All this while the Holy One maintains immovably the same ground. Man has undergone (according to the statement now made) two very great changes, first from holiness to sin, and then from sin back to holiness. Of consequence, He, whose holiness is without the least shadow of turning, must twice have changed his feelings towards his creature man; first when he turned away from obedience to rebellion, and next when he turned back from rebellion to obedience: and the change in both cases is expressed by *repentance*, that significant word by which men describe the changes which take place in their own minds.

In addition to what has already been advanced to obviate the objection, I would say; if matters had been so circumstanced, that the universe could in no way have been benefitted by our apostacy, the Creator must have regretted, even *all things considered*, that he had made man on the earth; but since it has prepared the way not only for his justice, but also his mercy to be displayed; and since the display of mercy in the work of redemption, is spoken of in the scriptures as exceeding all other displays of divine glory; and because there would have been no opportunity for this display unless man had been created,

and even suffered to fall ; therefore, I should think, none but an infidel would pretend that the passages brought forward in the above objection, ought to be understood to describe any such regret in the Divine Being, relative to his own counsels and acts, as is incident to beings whose knowledge and power and goodness are all limited. But while *we* do much to cause regret and make us ashamed of ourselves, we are required to *rejoice in the Lord always*. Phil. iv. 4. 1 Thes. v. 16. Why are we to rejoice in the Lord always ? Because he is always the same ; his plans are all perfectly wise, and his operations irresistible. It is the duty of the children of men, short-sighted as they are, to repose such unwavering confidence in the counsels and works of the Supreme Agent, as to prevent the least interruption of their rejoicing in him ; and can it be that he has ever, for a moment, been so distrustful of the wisdom of his own plans, or of his ability to execute them, as to interrupt his rejoicing in himself or in the works of his hands !

Having given a sketch of the character of JEHOVAH, as it is exhibited in the scriptures, I proceed in the

II. Place, to show what reason we have to believe that he is the only living and true God.

1. Let it be remembered that this is what he claims. "Is there a God besides me ? Yea, there is no God. I know not any." Again, "I am God, and there is none else." Isa. xlv. 8 ; and xlv. 22. Jesus Christ, in his intercessory prayer, addresses his Father (who is the same with the God of the scriptures) as the only true God : "That they might know thee, the only true God." John xvii. 3. Paul speaks of the God, to whom the Thessalonian converts turned, as the living and true God, in distinction from those gods which they forsook, which he denominates idols. 1. Thes. i. 9. Many have been called gods, and have been worshiped ; but I do not know as this broad claim, to be called *the only true God*, has been made for any except the God of the Bible. Most of the heathen gods, according to their own mythology, are restricted, either as to place or the sphere of their operation. I do not know that any one of them is represented as claiming for himself divine attributes to the exclusion of all others. Their worshipers are never represented as addressing them, as the psalmist addresses the God of the Bible : "That men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth." If Jupiter was worshiped by some nations as the *supreme* divinity, he was never considered even by them as the *only* God.

2. The natural and moral attributes, which the scriptures ascribe to Jehovah, are every way worthy of the true God. We have already seen, that there is no attribute necessary to constitute a being great and good, which is not ascribed to him in an unlimited degree. His duration is eternity, his place ubiquity, his knowledge omniscience, his power omnipotence. These natural attributes are described as being wholly directed by moral perfection, by unmixed, yea by infinite holiness. And this holiness is branched out into impartial justice, enduring mercy, undeviating faithfulness, and every other trait of character which is necessary to render an intelligent being superlatively amiable, and worthy of love, confidence, and veneration. Among all those



which have been called gods, and worshiped, there is none who has ever had a character attributed to him, which will bear a comparison with the scriptural character of Jehovah. "To whom, then, will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One." If the gods of the heathen were equal to the pretensions of their own worshipers, still there would not be one among them all, great and good enough to lay a claim to supreme divinity, so as to be considered as the true God.

3. The God of the scriptures has been known from the foundation of the world. No claims were earlier than his. We read of "new gods that came newly up;" and it is evidently made an objection to the validity of their claims. See Deut. xxxii. 17. According to the heathen mythology, the greater part of their gods were of this sort. They were deified on account of some exploit they had performed; of course, antecedently to this they had no divinity. As these deities came newly up, so there were many of them which soon disappeared, and were known no more. But the God of the scriptures is from everlasting; and from the foundation of the world unto the present day he has been known and worshiped. The same God, who is now worshiped by Christians, was the God of Abraham. And the God of Abraham had been worshiped before the flood by Enoch; and earlier still by Abel and Adam.

4. The very existence of such a book as the Bible is a good proof that Jehovah is the true God. In the same way that the heavens and earth prove their Creator to be the true God, does the Bible prove the supreme deity of its author. No other but the eternal all-sufficient God could give existence to this stupendous creation. Nor can the existence of the Bible be traced to a less perfect source. That a revelation from the Creator to his rational creatures, in this world of ignorance and error, is desirable, no one can reasonably doubt. What can be of more importance than to know the character, will, and designs of him on whom we depend for existence and happiness? And yet it is true, that on no subject are there a greater number, and more discordant opinions entertained. We manifestly need a divine revelation to be a light to the moral world, as much as we need the sun for a light to the world of nature. And here is a book which claims to be a revelation from that infinite Being who made heaven and earth. We read, and find it exhibits a divine character altogether worthy of the Supreme Being. No other book, claiming to be a revelation from heaven, exhibits such a glorious God, or such a wise and pure system of religious doctrines and precepts. Nor has any thing else had such an effect in exterminating polytheism and the worship of idols; or in counteracting and weakening the reign of sin. Does not the very existence of a book making these interesting disclosures, and producing such salutary effects, prove that the Father of our spirits has been mindful of us, and that the God which is here presented to our view is no other than the creator of the world?

5. Many of those who have worshipped other gods have acknowledged the *superiority* of Jehovah, the God of Israel; and some of them have acknowledged that he was God *alone*. Moses testifies concerning the heathen nations, "For their rock is not as our Rock, even our

enemies themselves being judges." Deut. xxxii. 31. Cyrus, the Persian, was a worshipper of other gods, and yet he says concerning the God of Israel, "*He is the God.*" Ezra i. 3. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, after he had seen the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshack and Abed-nego, from the fiery furnace, declared, "There is no other God that can deliver after this sort." And after he had been restored to his reason and to his kingly throne, he says concerning the God of the Jews, "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." Darius, the Median, made a decree, that in every dominion of his kingdom men should fear before the God of Daniel, (Jehovah was Daniel's God,) and then adds this as the reason for his decree, "*For he is the living God.*" After Manasseh had for a long time served the gods of the surrounding nations, it is said of him, "Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God." 2 Chron. xxxiii. 13. None but the worshiper of Jehovah could ever know the object of his worship to be the very God. If deists are right, in distinction from atheists, in believing there is a God, and, in distinction from polytheists, in believing there is but one God, then Christians are right (can there be any doubt of it?) in their belief that it is his character which is presented to them in the scriptures. If there is a living and true God, where, if not here, is he to be found?

6. An argument in favor of the claims of Jehovah may be derived from the existence, character, and preservation of the people which are called by his name. If our sinful world is not wholly reprobated, (and there are events of providence which seem to intimate that it is not,) it might reasonably be expected that he, who is the God of the spirits of all flesh, would reserve to himself a people; that he would have some true worshipers, whose character would be more excellent than that of their fellow men, and whose preservation should be the special object of his paternal care. The God of the scriptures has had a people ever since man was placed upon the earth. He had a people before the flood. They were then distinguished from their fellow men by being called "the sons of God." They survived the destruction of the old world. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were his worshipers, and he owned himself to be their God. In their descendants, this peculiar people was perpetuated until the advent of Christ; and since that period "the Israel of God" have been chiefly found among the gentiles. The argument in favor of the divine claims of Jehovah, which is derived from the existence of his people on earth, is two-fold—their *character*, and their *preservation*.

The character of the Lord's people furnishes one proof that the Lord is God. All have not been the Lord's people who have professed to be so. Nor do the scriptures represent the most sincere to be without spot. But the saints of the Lord, with all their imperfections, are the excellent of the earth. There have been no other such people as they. While the children of Jacob were his chosen people, there were men among them that displayed an excellence of character altogether superior to their cotemporaries who worshiped other gods. And at the present day, what other worshipers manifest as much piety, integrity, and benevolence, as those who call on the name of the LORD? Some

of these were but a few years ago idolaters ; and there are many witnesses who testify that a very surprising improvement of their character, in every respect, has been connected with their changing the object of their worship. Now if the worshipers of Jehovah have exhibited a character superior to the worshipers of pagan deities, it furnishes no inconsiderable argument to sustain the claims of the scriptures in favor of his being universally acknowledged as the true God.

Does not the remarkable preservation of this people on the earth, prove that the Lord is God ? It would be difficult to prove a perpetuation of the worshipers of Baal, Dagon, Ashtaroth, and many other deities, who once had spacious and crowded temples. But the worshipers of Jehovah are still to be found. They have changed their location, but not their religion. They first lived in Asia, then in Europe, and now many of them are in America. Immediately after the flood, and for a long time afterward, Jehovah was the God of Shem ; and now for many centuries has Japheth, according to the prediction of Noah, been enlarged and dwelt in the tents of Shem. Gen. ix. 27. The Lord's people have often drawn on themselves the hand of persecution, from those that are without, and from false brethren within ; and yet they have not been destroyed. Is there any other set of worshipers which has been so evidently the care of Providence ? What has already transpired seems to show that

" Israel must live through every age,  
And be the Almighty's care."

If the Almighty Maker of the world has a people, which he has formed for himself to show forth his praise, the worshipers of Israel's God are undoubtedly that people ; and if there is any people on earth to which he is, in a special sense, their God, and against which he has determined the gates of hell shall not prevail, here they are to be found. Therefore the existence and preservation of such a peculiar people, serve to prove *their* God to be the *true* God.

#### REMARKS.

1. In closing this first and most fundamental Article of theology, we do well to inquire, whether it has our full and firm belief. Do we believe that God *is* ; that his existence is a reality as truly as our own ? If he is possessed of such attributes as have been described, he must have been present all the while I have been presenting, and you have been perusing these communications. We have either approved or disapproved of his character ; we have been delighted or displeased with it ; and he has witnessed all that has passed in our minds. Since our most secret thoughts are naked to his view, let us not attempt to conceal or disguise them. How foolish is it to practise hypocrisy with a Being who is omniscient ; or to think of fleeing out of the hand of omnipotence ; or to imagine, that, with a selfish heart and an unholy life, we can please a God of unspotted holiness !

2. How unspeakably valuable is a divine revelation ; since it



acquaints us with **JEHOVAH**, the only living and true God ! What can be more important and desirable, than to be made acquainted with that Being, who has in himself more greatness and moral excellence than all other beings taken together ! And it is manifest, that if our apostate world had been left destitute of such a revelation, it would never have obtained the knowledge of the God who made it. Just look at the gods of those nations who remain unenlightened by revealed truth. How evident is it that they are no gods ; that their claim to divine titles and honors is wholly unfounded. Never has a single nation been enlightened on the subject of the being and perfections of God, except by an express revelation of his will. I grant that the book of nature exhibits the God of Israel and not the idols of the heathen, but facts show that unless we have the inspired word, we still remain ignorant of **JEHOVAH**. Therefore, they who esteem it a privilege to have been made acquainted with him, must greatly prize his word. "He showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation." When the question was put, "What advantage hath the Jew ?" it was answered, "Much every way ; chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." These oracles, once committed to them, are now, with important additions, placed in our hands. "Is he the God of the Jews only ? is he not also of the gentiles ? Yes, of the gentiles also."

3. In view of the foregoing truth, idolatry appears a sin of no small magnitude. If it is true, that there is one being whose attributes are unlimited, and that all other beings are infinitely inferior to and wholly dependent on him, then the two commands which stand at the head of the decalogue, can not be disregarded without great criminality. "If the **LORD** be God," said Elijah, "follow him ;" which was as much as to say, "If **JEHOVAH** be the true God, (as the nation of Israel has professed to believe,) give him his place, and worship none besides him. Let him have no rival, either in your temples or in your hearts." The idea of a dispute for divine honors between a multitude of claimants, should not for a moment be tolerated. Jehovah claims not only to be supreme, but to be God alone ; and declares that all the gods of the nations are idols, mere vanities. Since *divine* perfections are found in him alone, all attempts to exalt another to his place, must be unreasonable and impious in the extreme. This is the very sin, against which the Lord declared his indignation, when he sent his prophets to say unto his people, "O do not this abominable thing that I hate." Jer. xlv. 4.

4. They who have been made acquainted with the true God, are under pressing obligations to extend to their fellow men that knowledge which is so important and necessary. How dreadful to be ignorant of him, whose "loving kindness is better than life." Whatever else men know, if they are without the knowledge of God, their case is pitiable indeed. When Paul visited Athens, he found it full of philosophers and learning, but with this he was not at all satisfied, since he also found it full of the worship of demons, accompanied with a total ignorance of the true God. His spirit was so stirred within him, that he could not refrain from making an effort to dispel the thick darkness with which he saw they were covered. The zeal he had for the honor of God, accompanied with a concern for the salvation of dying men, would not suffer him to remain silent.

And what believer is there at the present day, who can see so large a portion of mankind enveloped in the darkness of paganism as there still is, and not burn with zeal to go and *carry*, or (if this be not practicable) to *send* them the knowledge of that infinite Being, who has hitherto been to them **THE UNKNOWN GOD !**

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## ARTICLE II.

CREATION AND PROVIDENCE ARE THE WORKS OF JEHOVAH THE GOD OF THE SCRIPTURES, AND ARE DESIGNED TO PROMOTE HIS GLORY BY GIVING HIS INFINITE ATTRIBUTES THE MOST PERFECT AND DURABLE DISPLAY.

By the work of creation is meant the giving of existence to a dependent universe. The universe, in the largest sense, comprehends all that exists, the Creator as well as his creatures. All besides God is dependent on him, and may therefore be denominated the *dependent universe*; and his giving it existence is the work of creation. The act of *creating*, in the most appropriate sense, implies the origination of existence, or making something to exist where before there was nothing. But, in the language of the scriptures, it includes the giving of form and a regular disposition to the original materials. These were produced at once on the first day of time; but the work of creation was protracted to the end of the sixth day, when the heavens and earth were finished and all the host of them. Gen. ii. 1, 2.

The work of *providence* begins where that of creation ends. The creation is not made, and then abandoned; but is *provided* for by Him from whom it received its existence. The work of providence comprehends all which God does for the created universe, in upholding, directing, and controlling it. In the most extensive sense, it includes the establishment of moral government over rational creatures, and the provision of a Savior, together with the means of grace, for this revolted world. All the events which have transpired since the first six days, are parts of the system of providence; just as all the things which came into being during those days were parts of creation. And the work of providence will go on, down to the end of the world, and thence through the endless ages of eternity.

This Article divides itself into two branches. The first asserts creation and providence to be the works of Jehovah; and the second, that these works are designed to make the best and most durable display of his infinite attributes.

I. It is important to ascertain *who that being is, to whom these stupendous works are to be attributed*. Is it said, they are to be attributed to *God*; I ask, to what God? to the God of the Hindoo; or to the

God of the Mussulman ; or to the God of the Christian ? It is important we should know which, among all those for whom divine honors are claimed, is the Creator and Preserver of men. That it is Jehovah, the Christian's God, I think, can be no less certain than the existence of a divine Being. Some of my reasons for thinking so, I will now state :

1. The God of the Christian is fully adequate to the performance of these mighty works. By which I mean to say, if there is a Being possessed of such unlimited attributes, as the scriptures ascribe to him whom they call the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, he must be fully able to originate and manage the whole creation, including spirits, as well as material existences. An eternal, infinitely intelligent, omnipresent, almighty Being, must be able to contrive and execute a system of creation and providence of ever so wide an extent. To adapt every thing in the works of creation and providence to a good end, needs not only an infinite understanding, but also a benevolent disposition ; and this the scriptures attribute, in an unmeasurable degree, to that God whose claims they support.

2. These works are expressly ascribed to Jehovah. *Creation* is declared to be his work. The first verse in the Bible tells us "*God* created the heaven and the earth." And let it be remembered that the Bible acknowledges no God except Jehovah : For who is God save the LORD ? [Jehovah.] Ps. xviii. 31. When the apostle made the declaration, "He that built all things is *God*," he undoubtedly meant to give us definite information concerning the builder of the universe. And what other being, except him whom the scriptures declare to be "*God alone*," could he have intended ? The God of the scriptures is also declared to be the God of *providence*. He is said to uphold all things by the word of his power ; to work all things after the counsel of his will ; to preserve man and beast ; and to have his tender mercies over all his works. Heb. i. 3. Eph. i. 11. Ps. xxxvi. 6 ; cxlv. 9.

3. The claim which the scriptures make in favor of Jehovah as the God of creation and providence, is not merely asserted, but well supported. "I know," said one of his ancient worshipers, "that our LORD [our JEHOVAH] is above all gods." He then informs us how he knew it : "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and earth, in the seas and all deep places." Ps. cxxxv. 5, 6. By managing the world at his pleasure, he shows it to be his own. When he stopped the sun in its course, he showed that it was he who made the sun and directed its course. When he opened a path through the sea, he gave a striking proof that the sea was his, and that he made it. Ps. xcv. 5. The God of the scriptures has, in very many instances, given notice beforehand what he was about to do ; and he has invariably fulfilled with his hand what he had spoken with his mouth. This is a clear proof that the future, as well as the present, is under his inspection, and that all events are under his control.

4. His claim to the work of creation and providence has not been set aside by any rival. Had his claim been unfounded, why has not the real author of these works come forward to put it down ? The God of Israel declares himself to be the *sole Creator* of the world. Take the following passage as a specimen : "I am the Lord that maketh all



things ; that stretcheth forth the heavens *alone* ; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself." Isa. xlv. 24. And concerning the work of providence, he says : " I will work, and who shall let it ? " Isa. xliii. 13. The claims which are made in behalf of pagan deities by their worshipers, he takes notice of, and shows them to be groundless. He shows that they had not declared the end from the beginning ; that they had not first told what they would do, and then brought it to pass. He challenges them to do good or to do evil against the counsels of his will. Isa. xli. 21—23. Now if Jehovah had been a false God, why has not the true God, the Creator and Governor of the world, come forward with a counter claim, and established it ; as he must, in that case, have been fully able to do ? Should any account for this neglect by saying, " Though he is able to vindicate his rights, he feels himself above entering into a contest with the rival who has usurped his prerogatives," such an answer is wholly unsatisfactory ; since it would suppose him to have created the world in vain, having no proper end to be accomplished by it. It would make him resemble the slothful man, whom Solomon describes, as not roasting that which he took in hunting ; as not finishing the work he begins, but as losing, through an unconquerable indolence, all the benefit of the labor which he had already expended. Prov. xii. 27.

The UNKNOWN GOD, to whom the Athenians had an altar inscribed, and whom they ignorantly worshiped, is so fully declared to us in the Christian scriptures, and shown to be that God who made the world and all things therein, that we should suppose all who believe in any God, and in one only, would believe in Him. We should think all would exclaim, with the Israelites on mount Carmel, " Jehovah, he is God ; Jehovah, he is God."\*

II. It being ascertained that Jehovah, the God of the Bible, is the Author of creation and providence, we are now naturally led to inquire,

\* But why, some will say, is not this the most liberal sentiment ; to consider all as intending to worship the same God, though they call the object of their worship by different names ? Why may we not therefore say,

Father of all, in every age,  
In every clime adored,  
By saint, by savage, and by sage,  
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord ?"

It is evident, that the God of the scriptures acknowledges no fellowship with the gods worshiped by the heathen. There is none of the conduct of the children of men which is more pointedly reprobated than their worship of idols. Ex. xx. 3—6. Jer. x. 8 ; xlv. 3, 4. Acts xiv. 15.

But if the God of the Christian and the God of the *pagan idolater* be different beings, may not the Christian's and the *Mahometan's* God be the same ? By no means. Their characters differ essentially. The God of the Bible, in distinction from the God of the Koran, exists in a trinity of persons ; he gives us a law which requires real holiness ; he saves the transgressors of it not by their own righteousness, but through that of a Mediator, and by means of a renovation of their depraved natures, effected by his own Spirit. And the heaven of the Bible differs from the paradise of the Koran, as much as the temple of God differs from that of idols,—as much as holiness differs from sin.

The God of the Christian is also an entirely different being from the God of the deist. If it were not so, a man might be a deist and a Christian at the same time. But this can not be. If the Christian becomes a deist, (i. e. adopts the principles of deism,) he ceases to be a Christian. And when the other embraces the principles of the Christian religion, he puts his trust in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and henceforward has no more confidence in the God of deists, than he has in the gods of the Hindoo.

What is the object which these works are designed to promote? *They are clearly designed to promote the glory of their divine Author, by giving his infinite attributes the most perfect and durable display.* That this matter may be made intelligible to every mind, I shall begin by showing,

1st. What is meant by the *glory of God*, when it is considered as an object of pursuit. The glory of God is *internal* or *external*, *essential* or *declarative*. The internal glory of God is that which is seen by himself, without needing any works to make it better known; and is no less essential to him than his existence. His internal and essential glory can in no way be augmented. It is a fullness of natural and moral perfection which is absolutely unlimited. When we are said to glorify God, or he is said to glorify himself, it never has reference to his essential, but only to his declarative glory. *This* supposes the previous existence of *that*; since nothing can be declared or manifested which does not already exist. It is impossible that the declarative should exceed the essential glory, or even equal it, though its approximation towards it may go on without end. Before the creation, though God had the same internal fullness he has now, he had no declarative glory at all: nor would the declaration of his glory have properly commenced till the sixth day of creation, had there not been some other world besides this; for a declaration or manifestation of his glory must imply the existence of rational beings to whom it can be made. If angels were created the first of the six days, (according to the supposition of President Edwards,) they witnessed the progressive work of creation. Job xxxviii. 7. The display of divine glory increased every day of creation, and has been increasing every day since; while the internal fullness has ever been the same. "The heavens declare the glory of God:" they do not originate it. His sending his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him, *manifested* his love towards us, but did not give it existence. 1 John iv. 9. To *declare* and *manifest* his perfections, is all which is accomplished in his most stupendous works, both in the kingdoms of nature and of grace. So when creatures are spoken of as glorifying God, and giving him glory, it is not meant that they increase the divine fullness; but his declarative glory may be as really promoted and increased by them, as by himself.

2dly. Having shown what is meant by the *glory of God*, considered as the end of actions, I am now prepared to show, that the scriptures represent him as making this his *chief end* in all that he does. They represent this as the end for which he made and manages all things: "The Lord hath made all things for himself." "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." "The heavens declare the glory of God." "All thy works shall praise thee." Prov. xvi. 4. Rev. iv. 11. Ps. xix. 1; cxlv. 10. These quotations are sufficient to establish the point, that all things were first created, and are now preserved and managed for the same great end, namely, to please their Creator; that the heavens and all the other works of his hands were designed to declare his glory, and lay a foundation for his praise.

The Creator does not need the works of his hands for his own use, in the same sense that we need them. He does not need the sun to give himself light ; for the darkness and the light are both alike to him. He does not need the air to breathe in ; for he is a spirit. He needs no food to eat, nor raiment to put on, nor the solid ground on which to tread. And yet it is true that he hath made the sun, the atmosphere, the solid ground, and all things else, for *himself* : For himself they were made, because they declare his glorious perfections and gratify his benevolent heart. Were he not his own ultimate end, what could be the meaning of expressions like these : “ For my own sake will I do it ; ” “ For my name’s sake ; ” “ For my glory ; ” “ That I may be glorified ? ” Isa. xlviii. 11. Ez. xx. 9. Isa. xliii. 7 ; lx. 21. Do not these, and similar expressions, imply that in all which God brings to pass, he has a supreme regard to his own glory ? If the works of creation and providence did not display the all-sufficiency, the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, they would, in no sense, answer their desired end. I proceed to show,

3dly. That this display of divine glory is *perfect*, the best it possibly could be. God could not have been honored, nor his creatures benefited, by his making them acquainted with his existence, if he had not also favored them with a display of his wonderful and amiable attributes. To suppose that he should by his works make an absolutely bad display of himself, would be so derogatory either to his greatness or goodness, or to both, that none of those who have any respect for his character pretend to indulge the supposition. Yet among those who declare their full conviction, that the works of creation and providence furnish us with a glorious exhibition of their divine Author, some are found who entertain doubts, whether that exhibition is absolutely the best which could have been made. To say, it is the best, appears to them as if it implied some limitation of the infinite God. But how do we limit him, by saying, it was not possible he should act at all, without acting in the very wisest manner, any more than by saying, he could not do that which was absolutely unwise ? If a man, who is reputed for wisdom, were to act unwisely, he would injure his reputation as a man of wisdom ; and how would it be possible that our respect for the only wise God, should remain undiminished, were we to believe his scheme of creation and providence to be less perfect than it might have been ? It could certainly be no more difficult for him to devise the *best* plan, than one which was less good ; and since he is omnipotent, it must be equally easy for him to give it existence : and surely to his benevolent heart the best plan must be more pleasing than one less good ; just as a good plan must be more pleasing than one absolutely bad.

Thus, from the moral perfection and all-sufficiency of the divine Workman, we should naturally infer the perfection of his works. Let us now look into the scriptures and see what they have said on this point ; for it is safer to trust in their decisions than in our own reasonings. “ As for God,” says David, “ his *way* is perfect ; ” and Moses, “ his *work* is perfect.” God’s *way* is the course he pursues, particularly in his providence ; his *work* is all which he does, comprising creation and providence. What is intended by *perfection*, when applied to



God's way and work? Does it not intend the perfection of an all-sufficient God? And can it imply any thing less than his having done his best? Such an interpretation of these texts is confirmed by this passage: "O Lord, how manifold are thy works; in wisdom hast thou made them all." Ps. civ. 24. Here there is a confidence expressed that though God had many and various works, yet he had made them *all in wisdom*. Could they all have been made in *wisdom*, had not every thing been adapted to answer the best end? And could the best end be answered, short of their effecting the most perfect display of the divine glory? When Solomon says concerning the work of God, that "nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it," does he not manifestly teach us, that it is absolutely perfect, so that no place can be found in all that he has done, or ever will do, where it could be improved either by adding to it or subtracting from it?

It is calculated to confirm our opinion, that we have not mistaken the import of the passages, which have been adduced to prove the absolute perfection of God's work, when we find there are other passages, which seem expressly designed to relieve our minds concerning the most unpromising events, by informing us that even these are made to subserve a good end. The stormy wind, it is said, fulfils his word, and the wrath of man praises him. Ps. cxlviii. 8; lxxvi. 10. These events, in the natural and moral world, seem to be arrayed in opposition to the perfection of God's providence; and yet we are here taught that they will be made to subserve it. The scriptures lead us to contemplate God, as intending to accomplish good by those actions of men, to which they are prompted by base motives. "Ye thought evil against me," said Joseph to his brethren, "but God meant it for good." Where the accomplishment of any mischievous device, which wicked men have imagined, would actually mar the plan of divine wisdom, they are represented as being hindered in their attempts to perform it. Ps. xxi. 11. When we are assured the wrath of man shall praise God, we are made equally sure that the remainder of wrath (i. e. all which will not praise him) shall be restrained. God can have no sincere praise from his creatures, any further than it is obtained by his disclosing to them the perfections of his nature. From the passage just referred to, it would seem that the wrath of man, or human wickedness, will give him opportunity to make that disclosure more complete; and where it can not, by the wisdom and power of the Almighty, be overruled to promote this desirable object, its existence will be effectually prevented. Thus we see that the same conclusion concerning the perfection of God's work, to which reason would conduct us, is clearly sanctioned by the voice of scripture.

4thly. The grand object of this display of divine glory, made by the works of creation and providence, is the promotion of *holy blessedness*. Holiness is moral excellence; and blessedness, when distinguished from "the pleasures of sin," is that happiness in which holiness naturally results. The fruit of the Spirit is both *love* and *joy*; the one is holiness, and the other happiness. There is no good, of which we can form a conception, that is superior to the holy blessedness of intelligent beings. If the universe, which the Almighty has brought into existence, is designed to embrace in it the greatest possible

sum of holiness and blessedness, it is then the best created system which could have been originated. By the works of creation and providence, God does not add to the benevolence of his own mind, but he brings it into a delightful exercise ; for he is blessed in so doing. He is as really blessed in *acting* wisely and benevolently, as in possessing these amiable perfections. When he had accomplished the stupendous and glorious work of creation, “he was *refreshed* :” and the psalmist tells us, “the Lord shall *rejoice* in his works.” He is truly happy in doing what he does. Among all the conceivable systems of creation and providence, he saw no other which would afford such pleasure to his holy mind, as the one he chose. And this circumstance furnishes one important reason for calling it the best.

To say, that *all* sin and suffering are incompatible with the best system, would be to argue against known facts. We know that sin and misery exist ; and we have seen them overruled for good. I will here advert to a single instance : the sin of those who crucified the Lord of glory, and the sufferings he underwent, have been productive of immense good ; but neither his suffering, nor their sin, was considered as being in the least degree desirable, except in connection with the influence they were designed to exert in promoting the holy blessedness of the moral system, which is *in itself* a real good, and dear to the heart of God. Since both moral and natural evil have already been made to further the cause against which they were arrayed, their continuance may consist with the general interests of Jehovah’s government. But were these evils to spread through his whole empire, none of his subjects would retain such a character as to derive any benefit from them. We may therefore be assured that so long as there is a creation, there will be holy and happy creatures. Were it to be otherwise, the end for which the worlds were made would be completely lost.

If holiness of character, and consequent blessedness, are of such primary importance to the perfection of God’s works of creation and providence, we may safely conclude that these works are in the best manner adapted to promote this great and desirable object. That creatures of a holy character exist among his works, is no contingent event. He gave them their superior faculties on purpose to render them capable of possessing a holy character ; and has filled the creation with lessons of moral instruction, calculated to form and sustain such a character. “The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead ; so that they are without excuse.” Rom. i. 20. The world of nature furnishes means not only for the expansion of our minds, but also for the sanctification of our hearts, and to lead us up to nature’s God.

The events of providence show the finger of God, and are well adapted to the promotion of piety, benevolence, and uprightness among creatures who are endowed with reason and conscience. When Solomon was speaking of God’s work and the perfection of it, he says : “God doth it that men should fear before him.” By what is passing before our eyes God makes himself known, and that with a view to attract our attention and engage us in his service. Prosperity and

adversity have each a place in his scheme of providence, and they are set one over against the other, both of them being designed to contribute their influence in improving our character. The goodness of God leadeth us to repentance; and the rod of affliction bids the wanderer to turn to him that smiteth him. Were we docile as we ought to be, we should find on every page of the book of providence that instruction which is calculated to make us wise unto salvation.

It is a totally wrong view which is entertained by some, that in the kingdom of providence God manages every thing by such immutable laws, as to render it impossible for him to turn aside, either to the right hand or to the left, to adapt events to the existing state of the moral world. It is true there are some things in the natural world that move on in an undeviating order; such as the revolution of day and night, summer and winter. To interrupt this order, would be nothing less than a miracle; and would ordinarily be no advantage to the moral system. But the word of God represents him, as giving or withholding rain, sending health or sickness, war or peace, plenty or famine, at his pleasure. Job xxxiii. 19—30; xxxiv. 29; xxxvii. 11—13. Ez. xiv. 21. Jer. xviii. 7, 8. Were it not so, how unmeaning would be such a menace as that, Jer. v. 29, “Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord; shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?” Where can he punish the *nation*, as such, except in the present world? Since holiness of character is man’s chief excellency, being altogether more important than those things which minister to the health of the body, or those which relate to the cultivation of the intellect, is not the sentiment an unnatural one, that God never so shapes his providences as to manifest his approbation of holy, or his abhorrence of unholy characters? As the present is a state of probation, and not of retribution, there is a sense in which “all things come alike to all.” Prosperous and adverse events happen both to the righteous and the wicked. But even now there are some discriminations made between the righteous and the wicked, in the book of providence as well as in the scriptures. Righteousness always exalts a nation. It often exalts a family, and an individual. Prov. xiv. 34; iii. 33; xii. 2.

5thly. The display of divine glory, which is made in the works of creation and providence, is designed to be *durable*, to last forever. To suppose it to be a mere temporary thing, would be derogatory to the character of the Most High. Has he made himself known, to be forgotten, and remembered no more? Does not the suggestion impute to the great Eternal the fickleness of a child? What motive could prompt him to begin the display of his glory, which will not induce him to continue it? Has he gratified himself by what he has done; and will not his benevolent heart be gratified by the prosecution of this great work? Or has the display, which he has begun to make, given pure joy to created minds; and does not their enjoyment, and even their existence, depend on its continuance? The Lord has made nothing in vain; nor has he made the least thing to answer a mere temporary purpose. “I know,” said one under the guidance of the Spirit of truth, “that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be *forever*.” Ecc. iii. 14. He could not mean, however, that every plant, tree, and animal,



which God has made, will remain forever : for we are assured that even the earth and the works thereof shall be burnt up. But *that exhibition of the Creator's glory*, which is made by the existence of the earth, and by every animal and insect, by every tree and plant, will remain forever. This is clearly the sentiment which is expressed by David, when he says, "The glory of the Lord shall *endure forever* ; the Lord shall rejoice in his works." Ps. civ. 31. By the glory of the Lord, he meant his *manifested* glory, the glory displayed in his works, which had been the theme of his contemplation through the whole psalm. It is as certain that the *display* of God's perfections will remain, as that he will remain perfect ; and as certain that he will shine forth in the emanations of his glory, as that he will continue to have light in himself.

The scaffolding, which the builder erects to aid him in accomplishing his work, is taken down as soon as the edifice is finished ; and yet the benefit gained by it is as permanent as the edifice itself. So it may be with some parts of the creation : like the scaffolding, they may be entirely laid aside, and yet their use remain forever. The earth is to be burnt up ; and yet the object to be answered by its being brought into existence, will be as lasting as eternity. It is the birth-place, both natural and spiritual, to millions of human beings, who will shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father forever and ever.

That mere matter should remain forever, is certainly of no importance on its own account ; for it knows nothing and enjoys nothing. As to the brutal race, their chief importance consists in their subserviency to our convenience and comfort ; and since they would be of no use to us in the world of spirits, their existence ends with the present state. "The spirit of the beast goeth downward to the earth." Ecc. iii. 21. "The beasts *perish*." Ps. xlix. 20. But rational creatures, who are the subjects of moral government, are all of them to endure forever. If these were not to be kept in existence, the manifestations of divine glory could not, in any proper sense, be said to endure : for what could be meant by a continuance of manifestations when no creatures remained to whom they could be made ; at least, none capable of receiving instruction by them ?

I have introduced but a small part of the proof which the Bible furnishes in support of the truth embraced in this Article. With propriety may it be said, that the whole of the sacred volume supports this truth. By this it is not meant, that every text bears direct testimony in its favor ; but who will pretend that there is a single text on the other side ; that there is a single text that tells us that creation and providence are not the work of Jehovah ; or that they were never intended to make a display of his glorious perfections ; even the best and most enduring display which could be made ? Texts enough can be found which will show, that creatures have done wrong ; but has not God done right when they have done wrong ? Has not his wisdom been displayed even in their folly ? And is it not manifest that in those very things, wherein they thought evil, he meant it for good ; and that from those actions of theirs, which were calculated to dishonor him, he has gained more abundant honor ?

## THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

How sweet is the harmony of melodious sounds! Nor is the harmony, which is perceived to exist between the precious truths of the Bible, any less grateful. The Article we have now been contemplating has an internal harmony, or self-consistency. It presents to our view two stupendous works, each of which requires unlimited powers for its performance; and both these works it assigns to the same almighty Agent. It represents the Creator of the world as being also the Provider for it. The two works are so connected, that the creation is brought into being, to be used and managed by the Creator, to accomplish the designs of his wisdom and benevolence. If our Article had represented God as infinitely wise in planning a creation, but as less wise in his providential arrangements; or as almighty in originating the world, and less powerful in controlling it, there had been a want of internal harmony. But this has not been the representation. On the contrary, both these works have been shown to exhibit the glory of a Being infinitely great and good.

But it will be more particularly my object, under the *harmonizing department* of the Article, to point out its agreement with those which precede it, and which have already been seen to derive their support from the word of God. We have now before us two Articles of the doctrinal series. Let us compare them together, and we can not fail to discover their agreement. The first of these contains the foundation of all other truth, the existence of God, that is, of a being possessed of unlimited attributes, both natural and moral. In a being possessed of such attributes, we discover an adequate cause for the origin of a dependent universe, and for its preservation and management. That such an all-sufficient being would have a creation, might be argued *a priori*, i. e. from the very nature of things. Is it not natural to conclude that he would employ his wisdom in some wise contrivance, and his power in carrying it into execution? Can we conceive how a being possessed of such infinite capabilities, as the scriptures attribute to Jehovah, should be perfectly blessed without exerting them? Must it not be as essential to his blessedness to *act* wisely and benevolently, as it is to *be* so? This does not imply that the Creator is dependent on his creatures for his happiness, although it is promoted by their existence; since their existence, with all its consequences, depended entirely on the good pleasure of his will. Nor does this suppose his happiness to be greater after the world was made than before; since he that *inhabits eternity* is as fully capable of enjoying the future as the present.

But if the certainty of the future existence of the world could not have been inferred from the perfections of God, its actual existence must irresistibly carry us back to him as its first cause. The agreement therefore between the two Articles before us is very manifest. That Being who has been from everlasting must be the Creator of the world; and if there is no other such in existence, besides Jehovah, then the work of creation must be attributed to him.

Some may think that the ultimate end of creation and providence, namely, *God's own glory*, which is attributed to him in this Article, is not in harmony with that pure benevolence which, in the first Article, was considered as essential to his moral perfection. How can God make his own glory his ultimate end without being *selfish*? And is it any more consistent with moral perfection, for a great and powerful being to be selfish, than it is for one that is little and powerless? Can selfishness in the Creator be holiness, while in his creatures it is the sum total of a sinful character? I answer, By no means. It is in its own nature wrong; and far be it from me to impute so vile an affection to the Holy One. But what is selfishness? It is not necessary to suppose, that all the love which one exercises towards himself falls under this description. The law of God does in effect require a man to make his own person one object of his regard, when it tells him to love his neighbor *as himself*. The love which he exercises towards himself is no more selfish, than that which he exercises towards his neighbor, in case he does not put himself above his neighbor. Nor would even this, in every instance, prove a man perverse: for if he should manifestly be superior to his neighbor in talent or moral excellence, he would be an object worthy of more regard. This idea will be better apprehended by looking at the great disproportion which exists between men and beasts. Benevolence requires that we put some value on the enjoyment of a beast; but surely not as much as on our own. "How much," said our divine Teacher, "is a man" (an intelligent creature) "better" (i. e. more valuable) "than a sheep:" and again, "Ye are of more value than many sparrows." Were a man to sacrifice thousands of sheep, and all the sparrows in the world, to preserve his own life; more especially, were it done to promote the interests of his never dying soul, there would be nothing in it repugnant to pure, disinterested love; for it would not prove that he possessed any undue regard to himself.

What has just been said will prepare the way for us to understand how God can make his own glory the chief end of all his works, without subjecting himself to the imputation of selfishness. When he determined to originate a dependent universe, he was the only being in existence to be gratified by it; and when the number of created intelligences shall have extended to its utmost limit, and their capacity for enjoyment shall have become ever so much enlarged, they will still, if taken as an aggregate, in comparison with their infinite Creator, be as a drop of the bucket and the small dust of the balance. The eternal God does not overrate his own worth, nor value his glory too high. To make himself any thing less than his ultimate end, would be wrong; it would be to relinquish his place as the sun and centre of the moral system. It would be a less evil, were the good of the whole creation to be given up, than for God to dishonor himself, or mar his own blessedness. No creature ought to wish him to make such a sacrifice in his favor, or in favor of the whole created system. But in reality the created system could receive no benefit from such a sacrifice. Let the character of God sink, and creation sinks with it. His perfect character unfolded, and preserved unsullied, is essential not only to his own blessedness, but to the well-being of his extensive and enduring kingdom.



While the Supreme Being makes an ultimate end of his own glory in all he does, this never prevents him from doing that which is best for the interests of the dependent universe; for how can a being of such unbounded goodness glorify himself, except in doing good? "*Thou art good, and doest good.*" Ps. cxix. 68. Will he be glorified by giving existence to a bad creation, or to a good one? We know that creatures of a bad character have a place among his works; but is it therefore a bad creation? When it first came from the hand of its Creator, it is said, "God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good." And is it not still true, that every thing which God made, and every thing which he has done, up to the present hour, is very good. If the creation, as it came from the divine hand, was perfect, there is every reason to believe that an equal degree of perfection will eventually be seen in his providence. Can an infinitely wise God glorify himself by a system of events which is destitute of wisdom? Scripture and reason say, it can not be. Let a being possessed of such attributes, as the scriptures ascribe to Jehovah, always glorify himself, and the best interests of the created system are made sure.

#### REMARKS.

1. What a privilege is it to belong to the intellectual part of creation. Intelligent creatures are fitted for beholding those manifestations of the Creator's glory which are made by his works. They are the only creatures that can be made acquainted with the fact, that they have a Creator, to whom they are indebted for their existence. Their happiness, in distinction from that of his other creatures, can be promoted by the enjoyment of Himself, as well as of his gifts. Creatures who are susceptible of knowing and enjoying God, are *immortal*. And what a privilege must this be, provided we do not, like profane Esau, sell our birthright for a mess of pottage, and render our immortality a curse and not a blessing.

2. How dreadful to be a man, a rational creature, and yet an *atheist*! To be made on purpose to behold the Creator's glory manifested in his works, and yet not discover this glory; to be furnished with a tongue to speak of his glory and talk of his power, and yet employ that tongue in denying his very existence! How is it possible that a creature, endowed with mental faculties and all the external senses, should deliberately declare (what I have heard such an one declare) that he can see nothing to satisfy him of the existence of a Supreme Being! Most men, however, will acknowledge that *speculative* atheism is folly. And, I would ask, is *practical* atheism any more reasonable? The practical atheist professes to know God, but in works he denies him. After acknowledging there is a God, he lives as if there were none. God is not in all his thoughts. He lays his plans without taking His glory into the account, or asking the guidance of His wisdom. He neither gives thanks for the bounties of his providence, nor humbles himself under his corrections. To the characters now in question let me say, Your belief and practice, if you would be consistent, must agree. Do not, however, adopt the belief of the atheist, in order to

produce that agreement. No, rather retain your present belief, and adopt the practice of the godly man, and then you will be correct and consistent, both in your faith and practice.

3. Are creation and providence the works of God ; then it should be the object of philosophy and history to make us acquainted with him in these operations of his hand. *The works of the Lord* (both of creation and providence) *are great, and sought out of all them who have pleasure therein.* Philosophy, by developing the laws of nature, discovers to us the wisdom, power, and benevolence of Him who made the world. The philosophical researches of David led him up to God the fountain of all wisdom. For a specimen of this, read the 104th Psalm. Is it reasonable that the master or the scholar should forget God? that while they seem enamored with the work, they should give no honor to the Workman? If the human mind had not been alienated from God, philosophical treatises and instructions would have been very different from what they now are. Nor would the historian have led us through such a series of divine providences, without making some explicit mention of the systematic agency of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. But if authors studiously conceal that Almighty Agent, who gave existence and laws to the natural world, and who directs and controls all events, this gives to their readers no right to be infidels.

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### ARTICLE III.

GOD HAS ESTABLISHED A MORAL GOVERNMENT OVER HIS INTELLIGENT CREATURES, AND, TO REGULATE THEIR CONDUCT, HAS GIVEN THEM A PERFECT LAW.

THE work of providence, which forms in part the subject of the preceding Article, was described as including *moral government*. This department of divine providence is, of all others, the most interesting, and is that which we are more specially concerned to understand. God's government over moral agents will furnish the principal matter not only for this, but for all the subsequent Articles of our system. Had moral agents been left out of his plan, the created universe would not, in any proper sense, have displayed his glory. He did not need, as we have seen, to create the world for the sake of displaying his glory to himself; for he knew what was in himself; so that the work of creation could do nothing to increase his knowledge of his own divine fullness. But without the existence of *rational creatures*, there would have been no eye formed to behold the manifested glory of the invisible God. No other creatures can even know that they have a Creator. They alone are capable of tracing effects to their

causes, so as to arrive at the First Cause. Their capacities are limited, and yet they can form a conception of objects which have no limitation. They can be made acquainted with the infinite greatness and excellence of Him, who is from and to everlasting. They, and they alone, are capable of delighting themselves in their Creator, and deriving their happiness immediately from him, that is, from a contemplation of his ineffable glory.

Intelligent creatures have capacities not only for enjoying, but also for honoring their Creator, in quite a different manner from the rest of his works. This superiority of intelligent, and especially of holy creatures, over such as are unintelligent or sinful, is implied in these words of David; "All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord, and thy *saints* shall *bless* thee." Ps. cxlv. 10. The saints, the holy ones, (by which we are here undoubtedly to understand all created intelligences that now possess, or that ever shall possess a holy character,) will actively praise or glorify God, so as the sun, moon, and stars, and other unintelligent parts of creation *can not*, and so as sinful intelligences *will not* do it. All those creatures that are raised into the scale of intelligence, are susceptible of holiness, even that holiness which is the highest glory of their Creator. They are capable of seeking the same ultimate end—the good of the great universe, comprehending God and all his intelligent family. Finite beings can love an infinite object, though not with infinite strength.

It must be obvious to all, that creatures furnished with rational faculties are capable of a government entirely different from that which regulates the motions of mere matter, whether inert or animated. While inert matter is moved and kept in order by the law of gravitation, and animals by an unintelligent instinct, men and angels can be influenced by motives addressed to their understanding. Such creatures as these are called *moral* agents. They can be influenced by a *moral* law, a law which points out the difference between *right* and *wrong*; urging to the one and dissuading from the other, by proper rewards and penalties. Under such a law all created intelligences must be placed; else the Creator could not be glorified by giving them existence. Since they hold such a high rank in his works, that it may in truth be said of all the rest, that they were made in subserviency to them, what can be regarded as a matter of equal importance with the government by which they shall be ruled. To have given them intelligence, and yet left them without the restraints of a righteous law, would have been to create a moral chaos, out of which light and order never could have arisen. And would not an eternal void have been preferable to such a creation?

The law which the Supreme Ruler has given to the subjects of his moral government is, like himself, absolutely perfect. In this part of his empire he has revealed it in the most explicit manner, and reduced it to writing, so that it may be "known and read of all men." The law of God, and indeed all law, properly consists of three parts, viz. *injunctions*, *rewards*, and *penalties*.

1. A law always supposes *injunctions* or precepts. The laws of God all enjoin some duty, something which we are under obligation to do. These injunctions are delivered either in the form of requirements



to do those things which are right, or of prohibitions, to refrain from doing those things which are wrong. In the decalogue we have a specimen of both the forms. In the fourth and fifth commandments we are required to do what is right, while in the others we are forbidden to do what is wrong. But the prohibitory commands always imply requirements, and the others do in effect contain prohibitions. The command which forbids us to take God's name in vain, requires us to reverence his name; and the command which requires us to keep holy his day, forbids to profane it. The word of God is all of it useful to make us acquainted with our duty. Both Testaments are full of injunctions, which are, in a sense, epitomized in the *ten commandments*; and these again are so abridged as to be comprised in *two*; one of which contains the substance of the first, and the other of the second table of the law. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." This is the first of these two brief commands. The second is like, namely this, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Mark xii. 30, 31. On this comprehensive summary of the divine law, given us by an infallible teacher, I would make a few remarks.

(1.) There is nothing in it which is *local*, nothing that restricts it to any particular individual, or nation, or world. These two commands form the substance of God's universal law, which is obligatory on every intelligent creature he has made.

(2.) This summary of God's universal law, shows us that there can be no obedience, without its reaching to the *heart*. Love has its seat nowhere except in the heart; and yet love is what the law always requires. All the duty we owe to God, is here comprised in *loving God*; and all the duty we owe to our neighbor, in *loving our neighbor*. "Love is the fulfilling of the law:" and in the absence of this the law is not in the least degree obeyed.

(3.) From this summary of the moral law, it appears that our love is required to be so expanded as to take in the *whole universe* of intelligent beings; for *God* and our *neighbor* comprehend the whole. In the affecting story of the good Samaritan, Christ teaches us to consider every one of our fellow men, let him belong to whatever nation or religion he may, as our neighbor, whom we are bound to love as ourselves. Nor are our neighbors, according to the sense of the divine law, all confined to our own race or world. The inhabitants of heaven extend their love to the earth; therefore it is that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over a sinner of the human race who repents. If they ought to consider us as their neighbors, we ought to regard them as ours.

(4.) In examining this summary of the divine law, we perceive that the love, by which it is fulfilled, is *impartial* and *disinterested*. We are required to extend our love to all, and to proportion it according to the greatness and worthiness of the object. On this principle it is, that supreme love is claimed for the Supreme Being: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all thy heart*." The law allows and even requires a man to love himself; but it tells him to love his neighbor too, and to love him as much as he does himself. According to this holy rule, I am not allowed to exercise any selfish affection towards myself, or to

overrate my own interest because it is my own. The law, of which these two commands are a summary, assumes the principle, that all the individuals composing the intelligent universe are bound to unite in seeking the promotion of a common good. Let this principle be fully adopted by every subject of moral government, and discord could find no place.

(5.) From this compendium of the moral law it appears, that God's claims on us for our obedience go to the *extent of our abilities, and no further*. The demand is made of every intelligent creature to do his best, to do all that of which he is any way capable. Every one is required to love God with *all his heart*, with *all his soul*, with *all his mind*, and with *all his strength*. Let it be understood, that God's claim on his creatures, to be loved by them to the extent of their ability, is not gaged at all by their *moral* ability, that is, their disposition to love, but by their natural ability, or capacity to love. According to the language of this command, no creature is so depraved but that he has a heart, soul, mind, and strength; and God requires the whole of each of them. Let him come up to the extent of this requirement, and sinless perfection will be the immediate consequence. God does not expect us to use corporal members which he has not given us, or mental faculties with which we are not endowed; but the use of all we have, he demands as his unalienable right. Creatures are all finite, therefore infinite perfection is required of none of them; but sinless perfection is required of every one, whether he be an inhabitant of heaven, earth, or hell.

Thus have we seen, that the preceptive part of the law is all summed up in one word, namely, love; and that the object for the exercise of this love is the whole intelligent universe, which is here all comprehended under three heads, *God*, my *neighbor*, and *myself*. But it is important we should remember, that it is not left to us to devise our own ways to express this love. In the decalogue, which was written with the finger of God, and in all the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, proper ways for the manifestation of this love are pointed out. These holy writings are full of injunctions, designed to direct us in what ways we are to manifest our love to God, our fellow men, and ourselves. But as the pointing out of these ways will be the business of the third Part of this work, we shall not treat of particular duties at present, but pass on to consider,

2. That part of the law relating to *rewards*. Every law virtually contains a promise of favor to those who render the obedience required. The punishment threatened is always pointed at the breakers of the law; and this implies the promise of exemption from punishment to those who keep it. That the law of God contains a promise of favor to those who obey it, we can learn otherwise than by mere implication. "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the *law*," (in distinction from that which is by faith,) "That the man which doth those things shall live by them." Rom. x. 5. Obedience to the divine law, so long as it remains perfect, insures the favor of the Lawgiver. This we may learn from the tenor of the law, and also from the history of God's treatment both of angels and men.

3. A *penalty*, either expressed or understood, is essential to every

law. Divest it of this appendage, and it ceases to be a law, it is nothing more than advice. A penalty supposes the existence of that authority which has a right to enforce obedience. Such authority is either natural or derived. Parents have a natural right to rule over their children. Legislative assemblies derive their authority from the people who choose them for this purpose. That which belongs to God is not derived, but is, in the highest sense, an original right. His authority to enact laws and enforce them by moral sanctions, is supreme; while all authority beside his must be considered as wholly subordinate. No one can attentively read the scriptures without perceiving that their Divine Author claims the place of a *Lawgiver* to his creatures, and not of a mere *Adviser*. It is in relation to his right of threatening and executing punishment, that he very often repeats this solemn declaration, "And ye shall know that I am the LORD." "The LORD is known," saith the psalmist, "by the judgment which he executeth." "The curse of the law," which is the same as its penalty, has a conspicuous place in all the divine enactments. Such a place it had in the interdict of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. That was a very impressive ordinance in the church of Israel, which required all the people to say *Amen*, when the curses of the law were read in their hearing. Deut. xxvii.

Two inquiries in relation to the penalty annexed to the divine law, demand particular attention. What is the evil threatened? By what degree of disobedience is it incurred?

*First.* What is the evil threatened? The law threatens *death*. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." "The soul that sinneth it shall die." Gen. ii. 17. Ezek. viii. 4. The death threatened does not mean annihilation; nor is it that death which is confined to the body, the pangs of which are momentary. Something inconceivably more dreadful than either of these is undoubtedly intended. The dissolution of the body is but a shadow of the death which is denounced against the breakers of God's law. As this is posterior to that, being suffered after the decease of the body, it is properly denominated "the *second death*." "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." "On such the second death hath no power." Rev. ii. 11; xx. 6. The second death must have been referred to by Christ, when he spoke of God's destroying both soul and body in hell. Matt. xx. 28. This death is the destruction of all the happiness which a rational and immortal creature is capable of enjoying, and the enduring of all the positive misery of which his nature is susceptible. It is "the wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness;" "the wrath of God which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation." Rom. i. 18. Rev. xiv. 10. It is now, and ever will be, "the wrath to come;" because the treasure of wrath, which the wicked treasure up unto themselves, will never be exhausted. Rom. ii. 5. That *the wrath to come* is the curse of the law, is made evident by this circumstance; believers in Christ, by virtue of their union with him, are *delivered from the wrath to come*, as we are taught, 1. Thess. i. 10; and yet this deliverance is nothing more than a *redemption from the curse of the law*; as we learn from Gal. iii. 13. The wrath to come, or future and eternal misery, is indeed the sum of the



evil which is threatened to the transgressors of the law. Concerning such as are not redeemed from its curse, it is plainly declared, "these shall go away into everlasting punishment."

*Secondly.* How great must be the degree of disobedience, to incur the penalty which is threatened? There is but one sort of penalty to the law, and this is connected with every transgression. To Adam it was said, "In the day thou eatest thereof, (i. e. of the forbidden fruit,) thou shalt surely die." Accordingly, the first act of rebellion incurred the penalty. There is a passage in the third chapter of the epistle to the Galatians, which is expressly designed to apply to this subject, and is so explicit as to admit of no controversy. The apostle is seeking to convince all such as are depending on the works of the law for acceptance with God, that they are still under the curse; and his argument is this: "For it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." He took it for granted that there was no impenitent sinner who would dare to say he had not sinned in a single instance; and if this were all the concession he could obtain, he deemed it sufficient to convince him that he was under the curse of the law. The law of God, consisting of many commandments, is like a chain composed of many links. Were this chain the thing which preserved you from falling, your dependence would fail, on the breaking of a single link. So the transgression of a single command subjects the transgressor to the penalty of the law. *The commandment which was ordained to life, (that is, in case of perfect obedience,) is now found to be unto death.* Rom. vii. 10.

There is a beautiful harmony between these three divisions of the law, which a few moments attention will enable us to discover. The injunctions, which form the preceptive part of the law, are certainly in harmony with themselves; since they all have one common root, viz. LOVE. There is a perfect agreement between the command which requires me to love God supremely, and the one which requires me to love my neighbor as myself. The first of these Jesus Christ called the great commandment; but the second, he said, was like unto it. It is one and the same kind of affection which the law requires me to exercise towards God, my neighbor, and myself.

The *precepts* of the law require no more of us than is necessary to render us perfectly amiable, useful, and happy. All that holiness of character which they require is needed to render us amiable, not only in the sight of our Creator, but in the view of each other, and even of ourselves. Let the law of God be entirely regarded, and it would produce complete harmony through the intelligent universe. The harmony would be complete between the Creator and his creatures, and between the creatures themselves; and peace would reign in every breast, since there would be no cause for the reproaches of conscience. The law of God, which requires perfection of every moral agent, is calculated to bind the moral system together, in one great, holy, and blessed society. The goodness of God is clearly displayed in requiring of his creatures all this perfection of character. These commandments and statutes are *for our good*. Deut. x. 13. Had God demanded any thing less of us, than an entire obedience to his holy law, he would have given us permission to be, in some degree, at least, unlovely, mischievous, and wretched.

There is a harmony between the preceptive part of the law and the *promises* which it contains. The promise of favor is connected not with disobedience to the precepts, but with obedience alone. Obedience to the law is in itself right and praiseworthy. A thing so lovely, and so entirely calculated to honor God, and fill the world he has made with happiness, must of necessity meet with his entire approbation. That he, who perfectly obeys the law of God, and consequently does all in his power to promote general good, should have a share in the good which he seeks, is most just and proper; and this constitutes a sweet harmony between the precepts and promises of the law. The law of God, however, assumes this ground; that the sinless obedience of creatures, though altogether amiable, is no more than what is *due* to their Creator; so that any thing less than such obedience would fall below their obligation. As *creatures*, we enter on life entirely indebted for our existence, and are always bound to “glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which are God’s.” There is no place for works of *supererrogation*, of which the papists talk. Even innocent creatures, who have done all those things which are commanded them, must acknowledge, in this view of the subject, that they are unprofitable servants, who have done only that which was their *duty* to do. Instead of an accumulated debt against their Maker, they have never gone beyond paying him their dues, or (as we more usually express it) their *duties*.

The harmony is no less apparent between the precept and the *penalty*. While it is obedience which obtains the promised reward, there is nothing but disobedience which exposes us to the penalty. The law requires that the glory of God, or (what amounts to the same) the general good should be sought above that which is private. Now it is in strict accordance with such a requisition, that the individual is menaced with the loss of his own happiness, who shall dare to seek this inferior good at the expense of that which infinitely surpasses it in value. If the preceptive part of the law were to allow every subject of divine government to make his own happiness the ultimate end of his actions, the penal part, to be in harmony with it, must contain no more punishment than would be for the good of the individual who is punished; of course, the punishment threatened could not be endless. Had not the precept of the law required us to place a higher value on the interests of the universe than on the happiness of an individual, it would not have harmonized with a penalty which threatens the transgressor with the loss of all good forever. But since it does require this, it is in perfect harmony with such a precept, that the penalty should be such as to forewarn every subject of moral government, that the least transgression of the law will expose him to be forever deprived of the blessedness which is connected with obedience. With great propriety are the involuntary sufferings of the transgressor made use of, to give stability to that holy kingdom, the interests of which he was capable of promoting by a voluntary obedience; but which he sacrificed at the shrine of selfishness.

To some it may appear strange, that God should threaten every transgressor of his law with the same punishment. It is evident from the scriptures, that, in the government which he has established over

his intelligent creatures, he designs to proportion punishment to the degree of criminality. See Matt. xi. 23, 24. Luke xii. 47, 48. Though the punishment threatened to every transgressor is endless, yet the increase of light and the repetition of transgression expose to an augmentation of misery. The punishment denounced against all who shall rebel against the government of God, may be the same in duration, and yet differ in the degree of misery to be endured.

The endless punishment, with which God has threatened the breach of his law, is a strong expression of his abhorrence of sin. Does it not imply, that in his view sin is an *infinite* evil? Every sin is not committed with equal strength, for the capabilities of creatures are different; and none is committed with infinite strength, for all creatures are finite. But if there were not something of such a vile nature attached to sin, as to render it proper to denominate it an infinite evil, would every degree of it have been threatened (as it is) with a never-ending punishment? All sin is a transgression of the same law—is a contempt of the same infinite authority—and is calculated to spread disorder and wretchedness through a dominion immense in its extent, and eternal in its duration.

Perhaps some will say, if it be so, that sin is an infinite evil, deserving endless punishment, holiness must be infinitely meritorious, and deserve an eternal reward; since it loves the same great object which sin hates, and has a tendency to diffuse happiness as widely as sin would diffuse misery. In the world of nature it would seem to manifest (to speak figuratively) no great condescension in an atom to consent to make the globe its centre of attraction; but what unbounded arrogance would be manifested, should it take state to itself, and claim to be acknowledged as the centre of the material system. Would the consent of such an atom to be attracted by a body immensely larger than itself, be a virtue as great, as would be its arrogance in claiming to be the centre of attraction? Would the humility displayed in its taking the atom's place (though lovely) be as wonderfully great, as would be its pride, should it wish the positions and motions of all the planetary world, and of all the material universe, to undergo an entire change for its own accommodation? The unbounded natural and moral perfections of Jehovah render him, in the intellectual system, an infinitely attractive object. When intelligent creatures, moral atoms, give evidence of their being strongly attracted to him as their centre, it shows them to possess that character which is excellent. Yet it would be very arrogant indeed, were they to imagine this to be some great thing—almost exceeding the bounds of obligation. To love such a worthy object, and submit to such a Sovereign, surely is the least they can think of doing; while to hate his lovely character, and rebel against his rightful authority, is the vilest thing imaginable. The same infinite worthiness which increases the obligation to love and obey, increases the obligation to avoid hating and disobeying. It ought, on the one hand, to make it easy to love and obey, and, on the other, difficult to hate and disobey.\* To love and obey this infinitely worthy and rightful Sovereign, deserves nothing more than his *present*

\* "Does not the merit of obedience sink, and the demerit of disobedience rise, according to the excellency of the object?"



favor; while hatred and disobedience forfeit his favor *forever*. Holy creatures can claim his continued smiles, in no other way than by their continuing to possess an amiable character. Nor ought they to consider their Creator to be under any necessary obligation to secure to them that character which renders them the proper objects of his love. One holy exercise of heart does not lay him under obligation to cause another; but one sinful exercise deserves that dereliction which will render certain a succession of sinful exercises that will never cease, unless interrupted by a gracious interposition.

Let nothing which has been said concerning the comparative merit and demerit of holiness and sin, lead any one to entertain undervaluing thoughts of the excellence of holiness. It is the perfect opposite of sin, and is as beautiful as sin is deformed, though not as meritorious as sin is ill-deserving. To be perfectly holy, is the best an intelligent creature can do; just as being perfectly sinful is the worst he can do. So the matter is contemplated by the sanctions of the divine law. Holiness has the promise of God's favor, which is the greatest possible good; and sin is threatened with his wrath, which is the greatest of evils. But mere simple law, when not qualified by some covenant transaction, can never ensure eternal favor to any thing short of an eternity of obedience; while one act of disobedience incurs punishment without end. The scriptures, however, would lead us to conclude, that God has not left any of the subjects of his moral government to remain in that state of eternal uncertainty, concerning their future character and destiny, which would be the consequence of the mere law system.

A *covenant of works*, which is something more favorable than mere law, places innocent creatures for a season in a state of trial; and promises to that probationary obedience, which shall be performed by each individual, (as in the case of angels) or by some constituted representative, (as in the case of Adam, the father of the human race,) a confirmation in obedience, beyond the fear of future apostacy; and with this confirmation in obedience is necessarily connected the promise of eternal blessedness. But while creatures are under a constitution of mere law, or while they remain in a state of trial under a covenant of works, divine favor is not insured to them a moment longer than their obedience shall continue without defect. A promise to those who shall return, is found in the Bible; but it is no appendage to the law system, nor does it belong to the covenant of works.

The difference which we have seen to exist between the good promised, and the evil threatened, in the law, creates no discord in the system of revealed truth. The same difference exists in human governments. No longer than obedience to the laws is continued, does it insure favor and protection. A life of obedience, though it should be protracted to threescore years and ten, can not be pleaded against the execution of the penalty on the man who has incurred it, though the commission of his crime did not occupy so much as a single hour. A man may commit murder or treason in a very short space of time. His refraining from these crimes is no more than his duty, and entitles him to no reward beyond the period of his innocence; but his commission of them is such an outrage on the interests of society

as forfeits his protection from the laws, and exposes him to their severest penalties. So it is under the government of the Supreme Ruler; and so it must of necessity be, if life and death are both set before us. If *eternal* life had been promised to one act of obedience, then neither eternal death, nor any other evil, could have been threatened at all. At least, the fulfillment of such a promise to creatures, who commenced their existence in a state of innocence, would forever preclude the possibility of their apostasy and ruin. The very idea of a liability to fall, renders it impossible that eternal blessedness should be promised to one single act of obedience.

That law, the outlines of which I have given, is manifestly perfect. It could undergo no alteration without being injured. Were it, for example, to be so altered, that *selfish* affection, under certain modifications, should be reckoned for obedience, there would be an infinite difference between the altered law and the one we now have; since one's own private interest is an object infinitely less than the good of the universe. Were the law to undergo such an alteration as to admit a mere external conformity to divine requirements to be acceptable obedience, it would amount to the same; since such conformity is nothing but selfishness. Were the penalty to be so changed, as to substitute a limited in the room of an eternal punishment, the altered law would be infinitely different from the original. The influence it would exert, to make us stand in awe and not sin, would be greatly diminished. But we may rest assured that the law of God is never to undergo such changes as these. Not a jot or tittle is to pass from it. Matt. v. 17, 18.

Types and positive precepts, which enjoin observances not in themselves obligatory, may be altered or abrogated. The typical ceremonies which were required of the ancient church, are sometimes distinguished from the New Testament dispensation, by being called *the law*. They are so called, "Heb. vii. 12. "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change of *the law*." This *particular way* of serving God might be changed, and give place to a more luminous dispensation; but the obligation to perfect holiness can never be in the least degree altered. When the apostle told believers in Christ that they were not under the law, but under grace, he must not be understood to say, they were not under obligation to be as perfectly holy as the moral law required them to be. Believers are not now under the law, as to its condemning power, as those are who depend on the works of the law for acceptance; but they are still under the law as the rule of holiness in heart and life. It is the immutable standard of holiness, not only for those creatures that have kept their first estate, but also for those that have apostatized. Every penitent sinner, who has laid hold on the hope set before him, however imperfect, is no longer under the *curse* of the law; but every such sinner is bound by the *precepts* both of the law and the gospel.

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

We have seen that the law of God, in its requirements and prohibitions, its promises and threatenings, is perfectly pure and self-consistent.

Let us now see how it will compare with the truths contained in the two Articles which stand before it.

Under the *second* Article it was shown, that God gave existence to all things, and governs them all for his own glory. It was also shown, that he is the most glorified by the best display of his infinite attributes : also, that this display is made by giving existence to the best created system which could be produced : and that the best created system is that which contains the most holiness and enjoyment. How entirely in accordance with this is the Article which has now been considered. This holy law, which we have been contemplating, does more to display the glory of God than the whole material universe. The glory of God eminently consists in his moral perfection ; and this perfection is clearly exhibited in the law. He says to his creatures, " Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." By all the descriptions he has given us of that holiness he enjoins on us, we learn that it is a pure affection, free from selfishness, pride, malice, and every thing else which has a tendency to discord, confusion, and misery. Such, then, is the holiness of the Lord our God. The holiness he requires of us, is perfectly pure ; and the holiness which he himself possesses is as pure as that which he requires. And in addition to its being perfectly pure, it is unbounded in its fullness. The work of creation displays the goodness of God ; but the law does it more directly, and with additional clearness. The law is a transcript of his own benevolent heart. It is his own character exhibited in the form of a rule, designed to shape the character and regulate the conduct of his intelligent offspring. In scripture language, to have *the law written in the heart*, and to be *renewed after the image of God*, is the same thing : therefore the law is the image of God. An infinite fullness of such holy affection as that which the law requires, must constitute a character supremely excellent and lovely.

It must, I think, be clear to every reflecting mind, that the intellectual system is essential to the perfection of the creation, and that a moral law is essential to the perfection of the intellectual system. And is it not equally clear, that such a *holy law*, as that revealed in the scriptures, is the only one which is calculated to make intelligent creatures virtuous, amiable, and happy ? Any system of rules, less perfect than the one which God has given us, would have failed in this leading object of all his works, viz. the manifestation of his glory. Such a God, as the scriptures represent Jehovah to be, must make such a law, requiring perfect holiness, if he make any ; and a law he must make, provided such creatures as moral agents have a place among his works. He could not manifest benevolence towards his rational offspring, without giving them such perfect rules to regulate their conduct. Nor would his benevolence be properly manifested, if these divine rules, so necessary to be regarded for his glory and our felicity, had been given in the form of advice. Even benevolence required, that they should be given with all the weight of supreme authority. The penalty annexed, which shows this authority, is no indication of the want of benevolence, but is in reality a strong proof of its existence. The curse of the law, no less than its holy injunctions, manifests the love of God to his intelligent creatures. Nor is the exceeding dreadfulness



of the evil, contained in the penalty, any proof that his love to them is small; but is a strong proof of its greatness. The law of God is the basis of a government as extensive as the universe, and lasting as eternity. But the law, if destitute of a penalty, or of one which threatens utter destruction, would not form a basis solid enough to support such a government.

In the preceding Article, we saw God seeking his own glory in all that he did; and in this, we see that he requires *us* to seek his glory in all which we do; for in truth, an entire obedience to his law will not allow us to fall short of this. One of those divine commands, which may be considered as comprehensive of all the rest, is found in this direction: "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." 1 Cor. x. 31. There would be no harmony between God's doing all things for *his own* glory, and his allowing us to do all things for *our own* glory: for this would create war between him and us. Let the Creator and his creatures only set up two different supreme objects, and there can be no communion between them. God would not make a supreme object of his own glory, were it not fit and proper that he should do it; and if it is proper that He should do it, it must also be so for *us*.

In showing the harmony of this Article with the *second*, I have been led unavoidably to show, in part, its agreement with the *first* also. Under the *first* Article the existence and character of the one living and true God were brought into view. We saw him to be independent in his existence, unsearchable in his greatness, and unspotted in holiness. To whom, I now ask—to whom does it belong to be the moral Governor of the universe, except to Him who is the only living and true God? A being of such unlimited attributes is fully qualified for this immense task; and every other being, or collection of beings, is infinitely incompetent for it. As God is the only being who has attributes to qualify him to reign over the universe, so he is the only one whose right it is to reign. It is his own creation. The beings to whom he gives law are the work of his own hands. We are under obligation to love him, because he is transcendently glorious in himself, and to submit to him as our supreme Lord, because "it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves." It is in favor of the law which the scriptures have laid before us, that it gives to Jehovah his proper place in the moral system. Had it given him a less exalted place, or demanded for him a less degree of love and obedience, it would not be a good and holy law; nor would it be worthy of our regard.

Between this and the first Article there is another point of agreement, which I am unwilling to pass in silence. Is not that law, which requires all created intelligences to be cordially united to their Creator and to each other, in perfect accordance with the union between the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, who are one in affection, as well as in essence? The Word was with God before he was made flesh; he had eternal life and dwelt with the Father before he was manifested unto us. He had glory with the Father, and was loved of him before the foundation of the world. And this love was reciprocated by the Son, who came into the world to glorify his Father, and to finish the work which he gave him to do. Nor is the love of the

Spirit any less intense. This is manifested by his coming to glorify both the Father and the Son. Now if the *trinity* of the Godhead be any thing more than three official names ; if there be something in the very mode of divine existence, to lay a foundation for a three-fold distinction, whether any such work as man's redemption had been performed or not, then we can discover a pleasing harmony between the law and the Lawgiver. In the three equal persons which unite in Jehovah, the supreme Lawgiver, there is a perfect exemplification of the law which he has given to the moral system. These Divine Persons, as they are exhibited to us in the scripture of truth, appear to have been from the ages of eternity counselling together, and acting in the sweetest concert, having no such thing as a separate interest ; so that if they did not centre in the same essence, they would nevertheless be held together by a mutual and infinitely strong affection, a bond which nothing in the universe can dissolve.

The children of God can not be one with the Father, as the only begotten Son and the Spirit are one with him ; for they can not be of the same essence ; nor can they ever possess unlimited attributes. But the same kind of holy affections it is practicable for them to possess. This is what is required in the law, and for the attainment of this the Savior intercedes in this petition in their behalf : *That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee ; that they also may be one in us.* John xvii. 21. A conformity to the law of love, is nothing short of a transformation into the image of the triune God.

The law, which is presented to us in the Bible, is manifestly the truth, and no lie, because it perfectly accords with the true state of things in the moral system. The tendency of any law of an opposite character, would be to derange and disorganize the whole. Instead, therefore, of its being the result of arbitrary power, that this law has been enacted, it is an expression of the most perfect benevolence, guided by a comprehensive and accurate knowledge of all the beings who compose the intellectual universe, and of all the relations subsisting between them.

#### REMARKS.

1. This Article presents an interesting subject to employ the thoughts and excite the admiration of intellectual beings. It presents to our view a moral government, a government sustained by law, not restricted to one family, or to one city, or country, or world : but extending to all worlds, and embracing all the intelligent creatures in the universe. All these belong to one great moral empire, under the rule of an omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, and righteous Sovereign. For the whole of this empire there is, for substance, but one law, a complete subjection to which would produce entire and universal concord. It is the existence of this great and holy government, which sheds a glory on the works of the Creator ; for without it the intellectual universe had been nothing better than a moral chaos. This dominion, that ruleth over all, imparts energy to subordinate governments. A conviction that we are accountable to the Supreme Ruler,

exerts a great influence in human governments, both upon the rulers and subjects.

2. They who are privileged with a place in the moral system are, of consequence, under the moral government of the Most High. Privileges are always accompanied with corresponding obligations. A privilege it is, and one of no small magnitude, to be taught more than the beasts of the earth, and to be made wiser than the fowls of heaven. Job xxxv. 11. But we ought not to forget, that with this elevation in the scale of being is connected accountability. As we can not divest ourselves of our rational natures, so neither can we get rid of our accountableness to him who made us. The sensualist seems to value his reason, only as it enables him to gratify his appetites to better advantage than a mere animal. A man may brutalize himself by his groveling views and pursuits; yet He, who has endowed him with the faculties of an intelligent being, will hold him responsible for their proper use. He still requires him to "show himself a man." Not only the sensualist, but every other natural man is impatient under the restraints of divine government. But those intelligent creatures, whose moral powers are not perverted by the influence of sin, esteem it a privilege not only to be endowed with reason, but also to be placed under moral government, the government of Him whose laws, like himself, are holy, just and good.

3. Since all the children of Adam are accountable to God, and subjects of his moral government, *they* must enjoy a distinguished privilege who are favored with a published code of his laws. Although the gentiles, without a revelation, show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, still by experience it is found true, that through the influence of that carnal mind that is not subject to the law of God, they have never attained to any distinct views of a divine government. But we, who are favored with a revelation from God, are left to no uncertain conjectures on the subject of moral obligation. We have clearly revealed to us the name and character of the Being by whose authority we are controlled. His laws, as they were uttered by his own mouth, or inspired by his own Spirit, are in our hands. If we wish to be good and obedient subjects, we are furnished with the best means for rendering us so. May Heaven forbid that it should ever be said of any of us, as of Ephraim, "I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing!"



## ARTICLE IV.

A PART OF GOD'S INTELLIGENT CREATURES, INCLUDING THE WHOLE RACE OF ADAM, HAVE TRANSGRESSED HIS LAW, AND FALLEN INTO A STATE OF DEPRAVITY AND CONDEMNATION.

HAVING considered the moral law, and the obligation resting on all created intelligences to yield perfect and unceasing obedience to its injunctions, I proceed next to take notice of that apostacy by which it has been violated. The apostacy, when viewed by itself and in all its natural fruits, is painful and repulsive ; yet, as an article in the system of divine truth, it is one that must not be concealed. Conceal this, and most of the other parts of the system will appear altogether without meaning. In reading the sacred volume, we pass but two chapters, before we find man a fallen creature ; and to the character and exigencies of such a creature, all the rest of the volume is accommodated.

The creatures, whom we know to have become apostates, comprise a part of the angels and the whole race of man. The angels were brought into existence at once, not being propagated by parents, like mankind ; so that each individual could stand or fall for himself. Hence it was that a spirit of rebellion might enter their ranks, and yet not become universal. The possibility of such a thing has been fully proved by the event ; for while some revolted, others retained their original rectitude. We read of "holy angels," and also of "evil angels." Concerning the latter class it is said, "They kept not their first estate ;" by which we learn, that their present is not their original character.

The human race came into being in such a manner that apostacy could have no entrance into our world, without becoming universal. All the millions who were ever to people the earth, were first comprehended in one common parent, and, according to the wise constitution of their Creator, their character was to be determined by his ; if he stood, they stood ; if he fell, they fell with him. God made man upright, but he fell from his state of uprightness, and became a vile rebel against the throne of heaven. To this first rebellion, as its source, may be traced all the wickedness which has deluged the earth. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." Rom. v. 19. Among the race of Adam the defection is universal ; there is not a single exception. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death hath passed upon all men, for that *all have sinned*." Rom. v. 12. Because one man sinned, all are sinners ; and because all are sinners, therefore all die. The universal reign of death is made an evidence of the universal reign of sin. That the reign of sin extends to the farthest boundaries of the earth, is attested not by the word of God only, but also by every other authentic history of mankind. The word of God asserts, "There is no man that sinneth not." "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were

*any* that did understand, and seek God." And what is declared to be the result of this survey? "They are *all* gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is *none* that doeth good, no, *not one*." 1 Kin. viii. 46. Ps. xiv. 2, 3. And does the history of the world give us any different picture of man? I appeal to those who are versed in historical reading—Do you not find the children of men, in every part and age of the world, appear like depraved beings; not only alienated from God their Creator, but also hateful and hating one another?

That sin prevails among all nations and classes of men, will hardly be disputed by any: but there are two important points concerning which there has been, and still is, considerable difference of opinion; one relates to *the time when human depravity commences*, and the other to *the degree of its prevalence*. Each of these points will claim our attention.

I. It concerns us to know at what period of our existence our sinful character commences. From the attention which I have paid to this subject, I have been led to adopt the sentiment, that the stream of pollution which runs through our life, takes its rise as far back as the time of our birth; so that with propriety it may be denominated *native* depravity. Some of the reasons for adopting this sentiment I will briefly state.

1. Native depravity is a doctrine which grows out of correct views of the *paradisaic covenant*, or that divine constitution (as some would prefer to call it,) which made Adam the representative of his race. In that covenant there was a probation, in which the whole race were deeply concerned, because on the conduct of our father and federal head, depended the character with which *we* should commence our existence as moral beings. As soon as he had violated the covenant, and become a rebel against God, the matter was decided that all his posterity would be rebels; not that on trial they would turn from their loyalty, as he did, but that they, considered merely as his descendants, would never possess any loyalty. His defection ensured the descent of a sinful, and therefore guilty character to his offspring. Of the verification of this descent the sacred history reminds us, when it says, "Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image." His moral likeness is undoubtedly the thing intended; and his son's being begotten in this likeness, implies the certainty that his existence, considered as a moral agent, would commence with a character resembling that of his apostate father. When it is said that God created man after his own image, it does not imply that man bore the moral image of God, while as yet he had nothing but a mere body. So when Adam is said to beget a son after his image, it can not mean that his son would bear his moral image, until he had a soul susceptible of it; but it evidently implies that this would be true of him as soon as he had such a soul. In the same way are we to understand David, when he testifies, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

But when do men first have rational souls, and become candidates for the rewards of the eternal world? If there be some starting point which is common to the race, (and it would seem unreasonable to suppose there is none,) what other time have we equal reason to fix upon,

as the day of our birth? In favor of fixing upon this, let it be remarked,

1st. This is properly the time when every man, considered as an individual, begins his existence. Until its birth the child is not a distinct person, but is in reality a constituent part of its mother. But the moment it is born into the world, this connection is dissolved, and its individuality is as complete as it will be in any subsequent period of life.

2dly. Since the first man, on the entrance of the breath into his nostrils, became a living soul; and now began, as I conclude all will grant, his immortal existence; is it not rational to believe, that as soon as the Lord God breathes into a child the breath of life, he becomes not only a living, but also an immortal being? Though the breath, which animates the body, is quite a different thing from the deathless soul, is there not reason for the belief that they are both received at once?

3dly. If our birth be not the dividing line between a state of mere mortality and immortality, I think no one will pretend that he can tell where to fix it. But is there not something in the word of God, (at least a hint,) which will enable us to decide this question? Why is not the following passage to the point? "Or as the hidden untimely birth," said the afflicted Job, "I had not been; as infants which never saw the light." Again he said, "I should have been as though I had not been." Job. iii. 16, and x. 19.\* Now if our immortality extends back to our birth; if we enter on life with a never-dying soul, this is the most natural place where to fix the commencement of our character. Can we believe that the rational soul has become a candidate for future and eternal rewards, and that it still remains destitute of *character*? Where reason has well nigh established a point, it seems to require less scriptural proof. There is a passage in the ninth chapter of Romans which is, perhaps, sufficient to establish the point now in question. It is this: "For the children not being yet born, neither having done any good or evil." Does not this declaration clearly import, that children before their birth, (which was then the condition of Rebecca's sons,) have no moral character, either good or bad; but that after their birth the same can no longer be affirmed of them?† I proceed to remark,

\* I have heard it intimated, that whatever proof is drawn from the book of Job, to support a doctrine, is inadmissible. I am aware that there are speakers, introduced in this book, who advance opinions which are incorrect. The same is also true of other canonical books. We well know that what Satan said, to disprove the disinterestedness of Job's religion; and what his three friends said to prove him to be a hypocrite; and what Job himself said in way of complaint of God's dealings towards him, was all of it wrong. The book itself furnishes us with ample means for correcting these mistakes; and at the same time it reflects much light on subjects of the greatest importance. And why may we not avail ourselves of this light? Job and his three friends, and also Elihu, were all united in their sentiments on such topics as the greatness and holiness of God, the immortality and accountableness of man, his original and renovated character, &c. Their declarations on these subjects have always been considered as scripture proof or divine testimony. And what reason can be assigned, why the declarations of Job on the interesting subject, relative to the time from which to date man's immortality, should be disregarded? This was a point on which information was required; and here it is given. If we do not receive it, do we not seem to show that, on this point at least, we are willingly ignorant? Solomon's view of this subject appears to have been the same as Job's. See Ecl. iv. 3.

† It will perhaps be said, there are other passages which represent children to be des



2. If we possess any character as far back as the time of our birth, the scripture warrants us to believe it to be a *sinful* one. The children of men are not represented as making their outset in life with a good character, but the reverse. Paul told the Ephesian saints that they were by *nature* the children of wrath, even as others; implying that all are children of wrath, and, consequently, children of disobedience; and that it is by nature they are so. Eph. ii. 3. It is expressly declared, "the wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they are born." Ps. lviii. 3. It is calculated to induce us to believe that the passage, just quoted from the Psalms, actually intended to trace human depravity back to the very birth, when we look at such parallel passages as these: "How can he be clean that is born of a woman?" "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." Job. xiv. 4; xxv. 4. It is here spoken of as though it would constitute a perfect anomaly, were a single child to be born into the world, without possessing the depraved nature of its parent.

3. The holiness of *the infant Jesus* is spoken of in such a way as to implicate the character of all other infants. "Therefore also," said Gabriel to the virgin, "that *holy thing*, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the son of God." Luke i. 35. This implied, that the child was she about to bring forth, would be a moral anomaly, an entire exception from that constituted state of things, which made every other mother to bring forth a polluted unholy thing. The reason was given her, why her child would be an exception, namely, on account of its being conceived by the power of the Highest overshadowing her. Who does not believe that the infant Jesus differed from all other infants? And is there in reality any more difficulty in forming an idea of the difference between a holy and a depraved infant, than of the difference between a holy and a depraved child, or a holy and a depraved adult?

4. - Such is the representation which the scriptures make of the depravity of *childhood*, that it tends greatly to establish the doctrine of infant depravity. Solomon says, "*Childhood* and youth are vanity:" again, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a *child*." Eccl. xi. 10. Prov. xxii. 15. Those who mocked the prophet Elisha, and were suddenly destroyed by the vengeance of God, are not only called children, but "*little children*." 2 Kin. ii. 23. In the ninth chapter of Ezekiel, the prophet gives an account of a vision which he had of Jerusalem, when a man with a writer's inkhorn was commanded to go through the city, and put a mark on all those who sighed and cried for the abominations which were done in it. He then heard this commission

titute of character for some time after their birth. God told Jonah, that in Nineveh there were more than six-score thousand persons that could not discern between their right hand and their left hand. This text clearly proves that infants have but little knowledge; but it does not furnish any proof of their entire destitution of character, like that which speaks of Jacob and Esau in their unborn state. The prophet Isaiah foretold an event, which he declared would happen before the virgin's child should know to refuse the evil and choose the good. Isa. vii. 16. This passage, like the other, may be considered merely as a description of the scantiness of a child's intellect, which renders him incapable of discriminating between things harmful and things useful. But antecedent to a child's capability of making any rational distinctions between good and evil, either in things natural, or moral, he may possess a taste both corporeal and mental, which prepares him to like one kind of natural and moral objects, and to dislike those of a contrary nature.

given to those who had destroying weapons, ready to execute the divine vengeance : “ Go ye after him through the city, and smite ; let not your eye spare, neither have pity. Slay utterly old and *young*, both maids, and *little children*, and women.” Thus it appears that in God’s threatenings and their execution, little children are not only involved with their more guilty parents, but are sometimes even particularly menaced and exemplarily punished. Now if the period of infancy were that of perfect innocence, is it not strange that the period of childhood, which immediately succeeds it, should be represented as so guilty ?

5. Christ establishes the doctrine of native depravity, by the argument with which he enforces the necessity of a moral change. “ That which is born of the flesh is flesh : and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.” John iii. 6, 7. Here the necessity of the second birth is based on the corruption of the first. As spirituality is represented to be the immediate consequence of being born of the Spirit, so carnality is the immediate consequence of being born of the flesh. Therefore it is that every one who is born of the flesh must be born again, born of the Spirit, in order to an entrance into the kingdom of heaven. But if an infant were not depraved, it would not need to be born of the Spirit. All who believe in the necessity of infant regeneration, must also believe in the depravity of infants. I proceed therefore to observe,

6. That whatever the scriptures have taught on the subject of the regeneration of infants, implying its necessity, practicability, or actual occurrence, will help establish the doctrine of native depravity. As to its necessity and practicability, what could teach them more impressively than infant circumcision ? That this was a divinely instituted rite, is a point on which we are all agreed. And are we not all agreed in believing that the thing which gave to this rite its significancy was nothing less than the circumcision of the heart ? By this significant rite was the church of God taught, during a long period, that their infants, in the earliest age, needed the grace of regeneration, and, of course, that they were to consider them as entering on life in a state of sin.\*

Infant regeneration as an actual occurrence, if I mistake not, is exemplified in the case of Samuel. See 1 Sam. i. 24—28. The case of John the Baptist appears to be a decided example of regeneration in infancy—infancy in its earliest stage. To Zacharias it was declared by the angel concerning his son, “ He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb.” Luke i. 15. This was as much as if he had said, He shall be born of the Spirit as soon as he is born of the flesh—the second birth shall immediately succeed the first. What else could be intended by his being *filled with the Holy Ghost* ? Miraculous gifts could not be intended ; for with these he was never furnished through his whole life. If John needed the renewing of the Holy Ghost as soon as he was born, then he was a sinner as soon as he was

\* The *baptism* of infants, with those of us who believe in its divine appointment, must furnish the same argument in favor of the necessity and practicability of their being saved by the washing of regeneration.

born. And if this extraordinary child was born in sin, no doubt the same is true of every other child who comes into the world.

7. It is no slender argument in support of our doctrine, that *infants actually appear like depraved creatures*. Nor is it necessary to consider their depravity to be of a *physical*, instead of a moral nature. They are voluntary agents as much as men. They are selfish, proud, ill-natured, willful, and the like. In all these things they appear perfectly voluntary. They exhibit the buddings of that depravity which displays itself more fully as they advance in life. Now, if we do not denominate these unlovely tempers and dispositions *depravity*, when they are manifested by infants, why should we give them this name when they appear in children, and even in men? When men *act perversely*, we conclude they *are perverse*: and so of children; for “even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure and whether it be right.” Prov. xx. 11. And why can not even an infant be known by his doings? Who is there that believes that the infant character is now just as it would have been, had man not revolted from God?

8. An argument of some weight, to establish the doctrine before us, is derived from the utter impracticability of fixing on any time posterior to the child's birth, of which it can be said, Here is the line that divides between a state of innocence and depravity. The expansion of the intellectual faculties is so gradual, as to be almost imperceptible; and the same is true of the manifestations of a depraved heart. If the selfish and perverse dispositions of the infant be viewed as free from moral evil at the first, how can any hour, or day, or month, or even year, be specified, when we may be allowed to denominate them sinful? Ought we then to think it strange that they, who do not extend depravity back as far as to the birth of a child, should believe (as they often do) in its spotless innocence, until it has advanced in life, one, two, three, four, or even a greater number of years?

In opposition to the arguments which have been adduced in support of infant depravity, it will be urged,

First. That infants have not capacities sufficient for comparing good and evil, and thus making a choice. To this it may be replied; that a disposition, inclining us to choose the evil and refuse the good, may exist, before the judgment is able to make any regular comparison between them. Let us suppose some province in the dominions of the Supreme King, where sin has never entered, or been heard of. The inhabitants of such a province may never have instituted a comparison between the two moral opposites, *holiness* and *sin*; yet without doing this, they have always loved holiness. Let us also suppose, that in some other part of the universe there is a rational creature, whose happiness has always been of a selfish character, and who never heard or thought of any other, and, of course, had never made a comparison between that happiness which arises from selfish and that which arises from disinterested pursuits; is such a creature innocent in being selfish? There may be some of the worshipers of Juggernaut, who never in their lives once compared the claims of Jehovah with those of their idol; perhaps they have never heard the name of the true God; but if they have not, are they on this account guiltless in their feeding on ashes? There are no doubt many of the readers of the Koran, who



never had the word of God to place by its side; but does this make their love to a selfish and voluptuous religion praiseworthy, or even innocent?

Secondly. It is urged that infants can not be sinners, since the scripture declares, "Where no law is, there is no transgression." Rom. iv. 15. This declaration does not appear, however, to have been at all designed to tell us that any section of the earth, or any portion of its inhabitants, are exempt from the control of God's law, or that there are any of the human race who are not transgressors of it. In the next chapter there is a passage which will help us understand the one on which the present objection is built; "For until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed where there is no law." Rom. v. 13. This was as much as to say, An explicit revelation of God's will is not necessary to lay men under obligation to love and serve him. They can sin, where no such revelation is made. From the fact that sin is in the world, the apostle infers the existence of a divine law, whether that law has been known or not; for a *knowledge* of the law is not a prerequisite to the existence of transgression. Where a law is of a positive character, so that benevolence, even to perfection, would not dictate the obedience required, it must be revealed and propagated, in order to induce an obligation to render that obedience. When the Creator placed our first parents in Eden, they were under obligation to love him with all their heart, even if they had no express command to this purpose: but their obligation to refrain from eating of a particular tree in the garden, arose from a positive law, interdicting the fruit of that tree.

The remarks which have now been made, will afford us help in understanding the apostle, when he says, "As many as have sinned without law shall perish without law." Rom. ii. 12. Those who sin without the knowledge of an explicit revelation, will not draw on themselves that aggravated punishment, which will be inflicted on such as press their way to death against all the light of God's holy word. Our sin is greatly enhanced by our distinguished privileges. But those who sit in all the darkness of heathenism, are considered as transgressors of the law of God, when their hearts and conduct are in opposition to it, though they have never heard that such a law, or such a God are in existence.\* Selfishness, pride, and other similar affections, with their correspondent actions, are wrong, and, in God's account, a transgres-

\* A few months ago, [in the fall of 1834,] as I was journeying through the county of Montgomery, in the state of New York, at the public house where I stopped, I found a boy of the age of eleven, who, though not at all embarrassed, was unable to answer such plain questions, as Who made you? Who made the sun, moon, and stars? Where do good people go when they die? and, Where do the wicked go when *they* die? By other means he gave proof that he was not at all deficient in his mental powers: but concerning the claims of God, or even his existence, it seemed that he had received no instructions, nor entertained any thoughts. I would now inquire whether this boy, though eleven years old, must not be put into the list of infants? If infants are not moral agents, and sinful agents, because they are unacquainted with the law of God, could this boy be considered as a moral agent or a sinner? Let us then only leave our children entirely destitute of religious instruction, like the boy referred to, and we shall effectually prevent their becoming sinners till they attain to the stature of men!

In what class shall we put the deaf mutes? Unless they have had the advantage of that peculiar institution, which Providence has in modern times prepared for them, they have no knowledge of their accountableness to God. Does this ignorance divest them of character, and take them from under the moral government of their Creator?

sion of his law, even where this divine rule has never been seen, or heard of by the transgressors.

A knowledge of the law is necessary to a proper conviction of sin, but not to its existence. Rom. vii. 7. There is no sin in the most depraved creature in the universe, except what is comprehended in selfishness. And I see no difficulty in understanding how a little child, or even an infant, can be selfish, even entirely selfish, in all his affections and actions. Infant depravity, therefore, is no unintelligible thing. It may perhaps be said, we ought no more to consider infantile selfishness to be the nature of sin, than we do that which appears in a mere animal. But does the objector mean to say, that an infant has no soul? If it has a rational immortal soul, it differs widely from a brute, even when to us that difference is scarcely discernible. In the infant there is a miniature mind; but it is not so with the brute. The apparent selfishness of the beast is nothing more than a mere animal instinct, and therefore perishes with its body; but the selfishness of the infant has its seat in the never dying soul, and increases with the expansion of its faculties. Nor is there any reason to believe that the character of the soul is essentially altered by the dissolution of the body, in whatever period of life it may take place.

Thirdly. Some will say, All your arguments to support the doctrine of native depravity, are set aside by what Christ said in commendation of the infant character. I know that he encouraged the bringing of infants to him, to obtain for them his benediction. But does not this very thing furnish one argument in support of our doctrine; for had they been without sin they would not have needed to be brought to *the Savior of sinners*? He came to seek and save that, and that only, which was lost. When the Savior said concerning little children, "Of such is the kingdom of God," he must not be understood to contradict what he had before said to Nicodemus, concerning the fleshly nature which is immediately consequent on the first birth. Nor is there any need of understanding him to say, that infants have any natural fitness for his kingdom; but only, that his kingdom made room for *them*, as well as for sinners in the other stages of life. He would not have them despised and overlooked, because they are so little, and so incapable of presenting to him their own wants.

Christ, we know, made use of a little child (one which appears to have been advanced somewhat beyond helpless infancy) to illustrate the Christian character. Matthew informs us that "Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them; and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matt. xviii. 2, 3. I can hardly believe that any, who have paid a careful attention to the subject, will consider this passage as furnishing any solid argument against the doctrine of this Article. Things animate and inanimate, rational and irrational, together with intelligent beings of different characters, were made use of by the divine teacher, to promote the moral improvement of his disciples. In one thing he would have them to resemble the dove, and in another the serpent. The unjust steward was presented to them for their imitation in one particular, namely, in making such a use of present advantages as to provide for future exigencies.

So in the little child he finds something illustrative of the simplicity, meekness, lowliness, dependent spirit, &c. which go to form the Christian character. We ought not to understand him to have said that every little child is actually a Christian; nor indeed to have decided any thing concerning the state of a child's heart; but only to have taught us that a little child (especially one well disciplined) has traits of *natural* character, which are a bright emblem of the Christian graces.

My remarks on native depravity have been protracted beyond what I first intended. The doctrine I have advocated, I know, is unpopular. The man who teaches that babes are little sinners, will be stigmatized as being rigid and contracted in his views. But if, after all, it shall prove true (and do not the scriptures furnish strong reasons for believing it will?) that babes are sinners, who is it that acts the part of their friend, the man who denies the fact, or he who asserts it? A belief in the sinless innocency of little children, if it be not true, cannot be a harmless error. Its practical results must be very unfavorable to the best interests of these young immortals. Who will care for their *souls*, while they are believed as yet to have none? Or if it be thought that they have souls, which are not yet contaminated with sin, who will bring them to the arms of the Savior, to seek for them the blessings of his salvation? Can even Christian parents become vigorously engaged in using means, by prayer or otherwise, for the immediate renovation of their children, when in their opinion they may be dwellers on the earth for some length of time (they know not how long) before they possess that depravity which renders a renovation needful? And I would seriously inquire, whether a denial of infant depravity has not some tendency to lead us to a denial of adult depravity; at least, in that view of it, which supposes every exercise of the unregenerate heart to be vitiated with sin? This brings me, as was proposed,

II. To show what is the *degree* of human depravity. Is it *partial* or *total*? This is a question of primary importance. The answer we give to it will do much to stamp the character of our theology. The *doctrines of grace* (so called) will stand or fall, according to the side which we shall take in relation to this very interesting question. Several of the leading doctrines in the scheme of grace must be given up by those who adopt the sentiment, that man's depravity is but *partial*. But if any doctrine of the Bible is capable of clear and abundant proof, the *entireness* of human depravity is certainly one. By entire depravity we do not mean the destruction of free moral agency, but the absence of holiness in a moral agent. Intelligent creatures, before their apostacy, were free from sin; but after it, they were "free from righteousness." The fallen angels, by not keeping their first estate, lost all their holiness, and are now nothing but *devils*, i. e. evil ones. And was the fall of our first parents any less complete than theirs? Did they not also lose the whole of God's moral image? And is it not an entirely depraved nature which is transmitted to all the generations of their children? And does not the depravity remain entire, so long as they remain unrecovered by regenerating grace? Let us now repair to the law and to the testimony to obtain light on this interesting topic. The entire sinfulness of men, in their state of unregeneracy, is proved,



1. By those passages of scripture which directly assert the fact. Such as this: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Gen. vi. 5. On this prominent passage I would make several remarks. 1st. The statement, that is here made concerning human wickedness, seems to be designed as a justification of the divine conduct in destroying the earth by a flood of waters. 2dly. Let us notice *who* it was that saw the corruption and violence with which the earth was filled. It was *that God* who searches all hearts, and who sees things just as they are. 3dly. It was the wickedness of *man* which he saw—man in the most generic sense of the word. 4thly. The wickedness he saw was *great*, great in its external displays, and still greater in its internal affections. The exercises of man's heart are here described as unmixedly and uninterruptedly evil, being "only evil continually." There is perhaps not an individual on earth, whose *external* actions are evil without mixture or interruption; but in this text the whole race of man, considered as apostates, are described as entirely and continually depraved, as their *hearts* are concerned, and as they are seen by their omniscient and holy Judge. And we should never forget that it is our *heart* which determines our character. If this be wholly under the dominion of sin, our depravity is total, a fair exterior notwithstanding. In the third chapter of Romans, after the apostle has asserted the *universal* dominion of sin over the human race, declaring there is none righteous, no not one, he proceeds to assert its *entire* dominion over each individual, by saying, "There is *no fear* of God before their eyes." In the seventh chapter he gives us this humiliating view of himself: "For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." Until he was born of the Spirit, he had nothing better than flesh; for "that which is born of the flesh is *flesh*." In the next chapter he makes this assertion concerning the carnal (that is, the unrenewed) mind: "It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." And what is enough to convince us that *entire sinfulness* must be intended by such a state of heart, is the inference he draws from the assertion he had made: "So then they that are in the flesh can not please God." It is certain that if there were any thing but sin in the natural heart, some of the actions of the unrenewed man might please God.

2. This doctrine may be argued from the texts which represent all men as possessed of *one character*, and as having but *one heart*. That there is a difference in the external conduct of mere natural men, is what none will pretend to dispute. But with all this difference in appearance, their hearts are said to be alike; so that one man's heart answers to another's, as face answereth to face in water. Prov. xxvii. 19. With all this difference in appearance, one sinner is represented as having no right to say that he is originally better than another: "Are we better than they? no, in no wise." If one sinner is *worse* than another, yet, strictly speaking, the other is no *better*; for there is no good thing in either the one or the other. The corrupt race of man, when composed of millions of individuals, is represented as having but *one heart*; which representation strongly implies a common character. It is declared, that "*the heart* is deceitful above all things, and despe-

ately wicked." No man, or class of men, is named, to whom this deceitful heart is attributed. If, therefore, it be not the heart which is natural to the whole fallen race, no one can tell to whom it does belong. Again it is said, "The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Here all the sons of men, (that is, fallen and not recovered) are spoken of as having but one heart, and that is fully set to do evil. The character, then, which is common to all unsanctified men is sinful, wholly sinful.

3. The scripture, foreseeing the fact, that the unregenerate would appeal to what they call their *good works*, as an argument against the doctrine which represents them as wholly sinful, declared beforehand the *entire unacceptableness of such works, even the very best of them*. It has declared, "The ploughing of the wicked is sin;" and their sacrifice "an abomination to the Lord;" and that their giving all their goods to feed the poor is nothing. Prov. xxi. 4; xv. 8. 1 Cor. xiii. 3. The reason for such a declaration is obvious, in case the sinner's heart is entirely sinful; but otherwise it is unaccountable. It is not difficult to see, that were a man to give all his goods to feed the poor and his body to be burned, while destitute of *love*, he would still be nothing, in the sight of that God whose name is LOVE. The scripture has said, "As a man thinketh in his *heart*, so is he:" it has also declared, "The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord."

4. *The entire distinction which the scriptures make between the character of renewed and unrenewed men*, proves, to a demonstration, the total depravity of the latter. These two classes of men are distinguished from each other, by names which imply an opposition of character,—such as *godly*, and *ungodly*; *righteous*, and *unrighteous*; *just*, and *unjust*; *holy*, and *unholy*. But if the unregenerate have any thing in their character which is not of the nature of sin, it must be holiness: and in that case there would be no fundamental difference between them and such as are born of God. Both would possess some holiness, and neither of them would be entirely free from sin; seeing there is not even a just man upon earth that doth good and sinneth not.

Though there is a great variety in the richness of soil in that ground which the gospel terms good, yet the whole of it is perfectly distinguishable from the ground which is not good; for it is all of it fruitful, and the rest is entirely barren. Good men of every stature in Christ are distinguished from their fellow men, by its being said of them, that they *love God*, that they are *meek, humble, contrite*, and the like. But did their fellow men possess the least degree of these same qualities, (which they must do, if they are not wholly destitute of real goodness,) these would be no distinctive characteristics, nor would they form any separating line between the two classes in question; for in that case, both good and bad men would love God; both good and bad men would be meek, humble, and contrite.

5. *The promises of the gospel are made to holy affections, wherever they exist, even in the smallest degree; and yet it is manifest that no unrenewed man can claim these promises*; therefore no such man has the smallest degree of holiness. Every man who has *any* true repentance, has the promise of being forgiven, and every man who has the least degree of that faith which worketh by love, has the promise of being

saved. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God. Such promises as these would give security to the whole unconverted world, if their depravity were not so complete as to exclude every thing of the nature of holiness. Natural men may have much of the repentance of Judas, and be full of that faith of which devils are susceptible ; and abound in that love which sinners exercise towards those who love them ; and yet not come within the compass of the promises, because such affections do not raise them out of the filthy mire of total depravity. But they cannot possess the least degree of those affections which partake of the nature of holiness, without becoming interested in the exceeding great and precious promises of the new covenant. If, therefore, it be granted, that the unrenewed are not interested in the promises, in common with those who are born of the Spirit, it must also be acknowledged, that they are altogether destitute of holiness, being *dead* in trespasses and sins.

There are some who acknowledge that man's *original* apostacy was total, and that his *natural* state is that of entire depravity, who at the same time contend, that this is not now his state, even in unregeneracy. These suppose a kind of *common grace* to be given to all men, by which they are raised out of a *natural* state, though they are not renewed after the image of God. Such persons may aver, that they hold to the doctrine of the total depravity of human nature : but their views are widely different from those which are exhibited in the Bible. And their error appears to consist in putting the dividing line between a natural and a gracious state in the wrong place. When the apostle declares that the *natural* man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; but that he who is *spiritual* judgeth all things ; it is manifest, that by the natural man he intends every man who is destitute of a renovation of heart. If so, man's natural state remains, until changed by regenerating grace. When Jesus declares, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," it certainly implies, that the corrupt influence of the first birth remains entire, until it is interrupted by the influence of the second birth, which is effected by the Spirit of God. The first is man's *natural*, and the second his *spiritual* state ; and the line which divides between them is that spiritual birth, by which, in a very important sense, we begin our lives anew.

The view which has now been given of our fallen nature, humbling as it may seem, is most certainly in accordance with the word of God. We have seen that passages are found, where the design is to prove the greatness of man's depravity, the language of which most naturally imports this depravity to be entire. With these agree the texts which speak of the whole race, with all their different appearances, as sustaining one common character and possessing one heart. In perfect accordance with both these classes of texts are those which represent the most specious performances of sinners as wholly unacceptable, and even abominable in the sight of God. The same views of depravity are confirmed by all those passages which teach us, that there exists a fundamental difference of character between the saints (however imperfect they may be) and all the rest of mankind. And in harmony with all these classes of texts are those, which promise good to every



one who loves God ; and yet limit the good promised to such as are born of the Spirit. And is there any thing in all the word of God that does not agree with this united testimony in support of the doctrine ; yea, of that view of it which supposes our sinfulness to remain entire until counteracted by regenerating grace ? Is there a single word that denies the apostacy of man ; or the complete sinfulness of every heart which still remains unreconciled to God ?

None will pretend that there is a solitary text which denies the apostate condition and depraved character of man ; but there are some who attempt to adduce scripture, to disprove the *entireness* of his depravity. I will glance at two or three of their principal texts. This is one : “ But a manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.” 1 Cor. xii. 7. Suppose the meaning of this text had been, that every man in the world has the Spirit of God to strive with him ; still it would not be saying a word against the entire depravity of every one who is not *born* of the Spirit, and transformed by the renewing of his mind. But from the context we learn that the passage means no such thing. It clearly refers to those miraculous gifts that were then in the church, which were imparted according to the good pleasure of God, one gift to one member, and another to another member ; and all for the sake of qualifying them to profit the whole body of Christ.

Another of these texts is found in the second chapter of Titus : “ For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.” But what does this passage say to disprove our doctrine ? Does any one suppose that the apostle meant to say, that the grace of God had made its appearance in the *souls of all men*, and that all men had already begun to be saved from their sins ? Why then does the psalmist say, “ Salvation is far from the wicked ?” And why was it noted at the conversion of Zaccheus, “ This day is salvation come to this house ?” The gospel, which is a system full of grace, exhibiting a way of salvation adapted to the wants of sinners, has appeared to all men ; it is propagated without restraint, and is required to be preached to every creature under heaven. But the scriptures by no means encourage the preachers of this gospel, to expect to find a gracious preparation in the hearts of all men, to receive the message which they bring to them.

To these two passages I will add another : “ That was the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” John i. 8. If every man in the world has some *light*, and more than he would have had in case Christ had never become the light of the world, still it does not follow as a consequence, that every man has some degree of *goodness*. Light does not always mean holiness. Light shines in darkness, but the darkness comprehends it not. “ This,” said the Savior, “ is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.” John iii. 19.

Neither of these passages, which are so much relied on, claims for unrenewed nature the least degree of moral good, or conformity to the divine image. Nor do we find any thing in their connection, that would lead us to suppose them to be introduced for such a purpose. But the passages which were adduced to support the doctrine of an entire

depravity, could not, without suffering great violence, be made to mean any thing else.

Some may think there is a want of internal harmony or self-consistency in this Article ; since it represents apostates to be *totally depraved*, and at the same time altogether guilty. Such suppose that total depravity destroys free agency, and, of course, the criminality of continuing in sin. This objection arises from an entire mistake concerning the nature of free agency. Those intelligent beings who uniformly possess the same unmixed character, are as completely free agents, as those who vibrate between good and evil, alternately choosing each of them. God is a free agent, though he never vibrates, but is unchangeably holy. The angels of light have never had but one kind of exercises ; and yet who will say they are not voluntary and free in all their obedience ? Nor are the angels of darkness any less free, though they have been totally vitiated ever since their first apostacy. The children of Adam, even in their unrecovered state, are agents, as perfectly free as can be found in any part of the creation. They are entirely depraved ; therefore all their affections are of a selfish nature : but they are not on that account less voluntary. They prefer such affections to those that are benevolent. If depravity brings along with it guilt, it seems reasonable to suppose that its augmentation, instead of diminishing, should increase the degree of guilt.

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

This Article does not disagree with those which precede it. The apostacy, together with all the sin which it draws after it, is at variance with every thing that is good ; but its presentation to us in the scriptures, is in such a way as to be harmonious with the whole system of divine truth. By comparing the present Article with the one which immediately precedes it, we increase our views of the evil nature and ill desert of sin. The law of God is a moral rule, to regulate the conduct of intelligent creatures, and sin is a moral evil, which is a violation of this rule. "Sin is a transgression of the law." This is the scripture definition of it. It is entirely the reverse of what the law requires.

In examining that summary of the law which was given by Christ, we saw that all its commands enjoined love, and could be fulfilled in no degree without it : also, that the love which was enjoined was universal and impartial ; supreme when exercised towards the INFINITE GOD, and when exercised towards fellow creatures, the same as to ourselves. Sin consists in transgressing this law ; but not in ceasing to possess such an exercise as *love*. Apostacy from God did not even diminish the degree of love exercised ; for apostates, as well as innocent creatures, love with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. Apostacy in its origin does not consist in any natural imbecility, but in a voluntary transfer of the affections to wrong objects ; and it can be persisted in only in the same voluntary way. It is beyond controversy that fallen creatures still love themselves. "All men seek their own." In the most wicked and perilous times it is said, "Men shall be lovers

of their own selves." Sin does nothing to diminish the degree of love which they exercise towards themselves, though it makes them act like the veriest fools in the choice of means to promote even their own happiness.

The whole affection of a totally depraved creature centres in himself. Himself is the only object, out of the three classes proposed in the divine law, which an apostate continues to love. The law says, Thou shalt love *God*, thy *neighbor*, and *thyself*. That creature, who retains his original uprightness, cheerfully consents to the law in each of these particulars: but the apostate dissents from the law in relation to the first two objects, and gives to the last, which is a mere speck in creation, all that love which the Creator requires to be exercised towards Himself and his whole intelligent family. Men, who are full of love to themselves, are described as destitute of love to God. Lovers of pleasures are not lovers of God. It was manifestly the sentiment of Christ, that men who did not love God, had no love to their fellow men, except that which had its source in love to themselves: "For sinners," said he, "love those that love them." The entire sinfulness of apostate creatures does not therefore consist in a destitution of all love; but in a destitution of all *pure* love, all that which rises above self. Selfishness is the comprehensive sin, which includes all that is evil in the character of transgressors. There is no sin committed where self gratification is not the immediate or ultimate end. Hence it is, that the whole of a sinner's life is, by an inspired apostle, summed up in one word, namely, *his living to himself*. 2 Cor. v. 15.

The nature of sin, as it has now been described, is capable of being clearly understood, even by a child. We can every one of us, by means of our own experience, form a definite idea of selfishness; for we know what it is to be governed by interested motives. Now to be governed by such motives entirely, is to be completely under the dominion of sin. Of motives more contracted and unworthy we can form no conception. Malice of the most malignant kind, takes its rise in a selfish heart. Envy springs from the same corrupt fountain. So does pride, covetousness, intemperance, uncleanness, and every other vile affection and base action.

In the foregoing Article, while looking at the nature of moral government, we were led to contemplate apostacy from God as an evil which *might* exist; but now it is presented to us as a *fact*. And when we contemplate sin as an actual existence, it appears as vile and noxious, as the prohibitions and threatenings of the law ever represented it. By what has transpired it is proved out, that the tendency of sin is utterly to ruin the character of intelligent beings. It makes them odious and mischievous, in proportion as they have capacities to qualify them to be amiable and useful.

What an inconceivably vile and mischievous being is Satan! In his state of innocence he was among the first of the works of God; but sin has rendered him vile and despicable beyond any other being in the universe. See Gen. iii. 14. In his case we see that sin not only spoils the creature who commits it, but that its natural tendency is to destroy all the good there is in the universe. Since he is distinguished from the other fallen angels as their leader and prince, there is reason



to believe that rebellion commenced with him, and that he would have drawn into it all the angels of light, had it been in his power. He did effect, as we well know, the revolt of the whole race of man, by drawing our common parents from their allegiance. And now, since a kingdom of reconciliation has been set up in this apostate world, he is doing all in his power to hinder its success. He walks about seeking whom he may devour. 1 Pet. v. 8. In this individual being we see strikingly exemplified the nature and tendency of moral evil. Its nature and tendency are the same in every other sinful creature.

Thus by its actual existence, sin is shown to be most vile and ruinous. Is it not proper to denominate it an *infinite* evil? We are sensible there is no creature, not even the prince of devils, who can oppose God with infinite strength; for all created minds are limited in their capacities. But rebellion against the government of the Most High, is the greatest evil of which creatures are capable. It is violating the greatest possible obligation, and the mischief, which it has a direct tendency to produce, is absolutely infinite.

The apostacy which has taken place has afforded an opportunity to the Supreme Lawgiver to furnish us with a practical exposition of his law. We are now taught by facts, that its penalty is incurred by the first sin, and that its penalty is nothing less than punishment without end. "The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Jude 6. As soon as man had become a transgressor of the law, he was driven from an earthly paradise, the figure of a heavenly; and a flaming sword which turned every way, was so placed as to keep the way of the tree of life. Gen. iii. 24. The solemn denunciation was then pronounced, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return;" and this has been executed before our eyes with an affecting exactness, which seems designed to give ocular proof of the certainty of the "second death," unless its pains should be avoided by an interest in the Redeemer's righteousness. The race of Adam, excepting those who have been recovered by grace, are as much under the curse of the law as the apostate angels: "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Gal. iii. 10. These apostacies have given an opportunity for God to show his creatures what he meant by the threatenings annexed to his law. The sinning angels are now suffering punishment without hope of release. Fallen men are under the same condemnation, but with this difference, that they are favored with another probation. But as this probation is represented to be *wholly of grace*, it helps establish the point, that the evil threatened in the law is nothing less than death eternal.

Sin, though a transgression of the law, is not an abrogation of it; there is therefore no want of agreement between *that* Article, which exhibits the law as a perfect rule of moral government, and *this*, which shows it has been shamefully transgressed. The law remains in full force, though the conduct of apostates has manifested their determination to be regulated by it no longer. But when the precept is disregarded, the penalty takes effect; and punishment executed upon the transgres-

sor, preserves the law from suffering that contempt which otherwise would result from his transgression.

Some may think there is no harmony between *this* and the *second* Article. We readily grant that the Creator is not glorified by the rebellion of his creatures, through any natural tendency it can have to produce such a result. It is certain, that nothing can be more remote from the intention of rebellious creatures, than to glorify God. Could they succeed in their projects, his declarative glory would suffer an eternal eclipse. But that which was spoken by the psalmist concerning a portion of God's enemies, will apply to them all : "They intended evil against thee ; they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform." Ps. xxi. 11. There is probably no part of all the system of God's providence, where his infinite perfections will be so gloriously displayed, as in his management of this dreadful rebellion.

This Article is in harmony with the *first*. It is in view of the truth contained in that Article, that we discover the immensely evil nature of the rebellion which is treated of in this. The Being against whom angels and men have rebelled, is none other than the eternal, all-sufficient, holy, and blessed God. He it is whom we have hated, whose authority we have contemned, and whose favor we have despised. A Being of such unspotted holiness, as that Article exhibited, must infinitely abhor such a vile thing as the rebellion of the subjects of his moral government. It ought not to excite our wonder that he could not endure to have those angels, who by transgression had become devils, remain in heaven ; or that he should expel our apostate parents from Eden ; or that he should deluge the old world with water and the cities of the plain with fire, on account of their high-handed contempt of his righteous authority. Nor ought we to think it strange to hear it said, "God is angry with the wicked every day."

#### REMARKS.

1. What an unprovoked thing is rebellion under the government of God ! Nothing could be more causeless than the apostacy of angels and men. Well might the supreme King say, "They hated me without cause." He who required their subjection was their Creator and Benefactor ; and nothing could be more righteous and benevolent than the laws by which he required them to be ruled. Why were they not contented to be the subjects of such a King, and to be ruled by such perfect laws !

2. Rebellion against the government of God is as *foolish* as it is wicked. How could the first rebel entertain the least expectation of success in his resistance of the authority of the Most High, the being who gave existence to a universe ! And what encouragement can later rebels have to imagine they shall be able to harden themselves against God, and prosper ? Notwithstanding the expulsion of sinning angels from the paradise above, and of our sinning progenitors from a paradise below, the rebellion against the government of heaven's King is still prosecuted, and with as much zeal as if the most sanguine hopes were entertained of final success.

Rebellion against divine government is foolish, not only because there is no hope of success, but because without this government the universe can never have peace and happiness. Were the enemies of God to succeed in their attempts to subvert his government, what would they establish in its room? All such attempts to better their condition, are well described by the conduct of those, who forsake a fountain of living waters for broken cisterns which can hold no water.

3. It is truly affecting to think how much mischief a single individual can do. "One sinner destroyeth much good." There is reason to believe, the rebellion in heaven began with one of the angels, and that the rebel angel effected the apostacy of a multitude of his associates. This did not satisfy him: he next drew from allegiance our first mother; and she in her turn prevailed with our first father to disobey the divine command: and thus our whole race was rendered corrupt. How affecting the thought, that sin has such a tendency to diffuse itself. If an individual has the power of being so extensively mischievous, with how much care ought every one of us to watch over all he does, all he writes, all he speaks, or even thinks. A mischievous life is what we ought to deprecate more than poverty and disgrace.

4. If sin belongs to the character of *man*, then it belongs to *you* and *me*, for we are men. To acknowledge that human nature is depraved, is one thing; and to feel that *we* are sinners, is another. Do we admit that what has been said to prove that human depravity is entire, will apply to *ourselves*? Are we fully convinced of total depravity in relation to our own hearts? Am *I*? Are *you*? And is this conviction the result of an actual survey, which each one has taken of his own heart and life? To be destitute of such conviction, implies self-ignorance, and betokens a state of moral death.

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## ARTICLE V.

BY MEANS OF AN INFINITE ATONEMENT FOR SIN, GOD HAS MADE A PROVISION, WHEREBY THE RACE OF ADAM CAN BE DELIVERED FROM THEIR STATE OF DEPRAVITY AND CONDEMNATION.

It is matter of eternal gratitude and praise, that a doctrine which so brightens the prospects of our fallen world, is revealed with such copiousness and plainness in the word of God. Here is that fountain which, it was predicted, should be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. Zech. xiii. 1. Indeed there is no other such fountain; and this is free, not for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem alone, but for the whole of this polluted world.



The word *atonement*, which occurs frequently in the Old Testament, is found but once in the New. Rom. v. 11. In this place the sense of the original word is *reconciliation*. Atonement is thus denominated, not because it is reconciliation itself, nor because it is the efficient cause of it, but rather on account of the influence it exerts in preparing the way for a reconciliation, to be effected by the agency of the Holy Ghost. *Propitiation* is a word much of the same import, implying that an expedient has been devised to render a peace between our offended Sovereign and his offending subjects, consistent with the maintenance of his supreme authority over us. Rom. iii. 25. 1 John ii. 2, and iv. 10. Besides the terms *atonement* and *propitiation*, the scriptures have made use of a number of other words to describe the same thing : such as a *sin-offering* ; a *sacrifice* ; a *price* with which we are bought ; a *ransom*, a *redemption* by which we are redeemed ; a *righteousness brought in*, a righteousness by which comes the free gift unto justification of life, and through which grace reigns unto eternal life. Ex. xxix. 14. Heb. xiii. 11, 12. Heb. ix. 26, and x. 26. 1 Cor. vi. 20. Matt. xx. 28. Rom. iii. 24. Dan. ix. 24. Rom. v. 18—21.

The atonement, by whatever name it is known, is manifestly a provision for apostate men, to render it honorable to the government of the Most High, for him to reconcile them to himself, and remit the punishment of their sins. “ God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” 2 Cor. v. 19. The inconsistency of granting forgiveness to rebellious men, unless they become reconciled to God, and exercise unfeigned repentance for their sins, must be evident to all.

But why, (some will say,) must forgiveness be granted through the blood of Christ ? Why can not God forgive those who repent without any expiation for their sins ? Does not a scheme of religion which makes an expiatory sacrifice necessary to forgiveness, represent him as implacable, rather than merciful ? Let me hope that I shall have the most careful and candid attention of every individual, to a doctrine which claims to be at the very foundation of the religion of the gospel. That it does make this claim, is made clear by such passages as these : “ This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other ; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.” “ For other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” “ For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” Acts iv. 12. 1 Cor. ii. 2 ; iii. 11.

Let the gospel atonement be investigated ; and let its unlovely features (if it has such) be pointed out. But surely, if the law be viewed as holy, just, and good, I do not see how it is possible the atonement should be considered as unlovely. And does the Creator, I would ask, appear unamiable, because he claims the prerogative to exercise authority over his intelligent creatures ? Is it not altogether better for the moral system to have government than to be without it ? And who is so capable of exercising this government as the infinite God : or to whom else does it appertain to sway the sceptre of the universe ? All will acknowledge that obedience to good laws is preferable to a state

of anarchy. And can we conceive of better laws, than those which are presented to us in the word of God? If it should be said, "The precepts are good, but the penalties are dreadful," I would ask, Who ever heard or conceived of laws without penalties; or of what force are penalties in case they are not dreaded? The gift of a *fiery law* to Israel, is spoken of as an expression of God's love to that people. Deut. xxxiii. 2, 3. "The law worketh wrath;" and yet the same benevolent character in the Lawgiver, is displayed in the penalty which worketh wrath, as in the precepts which enjoin obedience. The wrath which is threatened, and which is actually executed on the breakers of the law, is not in the least degree malevolent. Who does not distinguish between a selfish revenge, which is gratified with inflicting evil on its enemy, in contrariety to wholesome laws, and the infliction of a merited punishment, in support of those laws?

The laws of God are every thing to the moral system. They must be supported, or his throne is overturned: they must be supported, or the intelligent creation becomes a scene of wild disorder and wretchedness. Without a penalty, laws can not exist; and if transgressions are connived at, the penalty is worse than useless.

The object of the supreme Lawgiver, in providing a propitiatory offering, was not to *placate his feelings* towards sin: His feelings towards this, can never be changed. Nor was it to originate feelings of benevolence towards sinners, for such feelings he had always possessed; as the very provision of an atonement, and one so exceedingly expensive, clearly shows: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John iv. 10. But his object was to condemn sin as publicly, pointedly, and fully, as if sinners themselves had suffered that endless punishment which their rebellion had deserved.

Could sin have been pardoned *without atonement*, and yet the character of the divine Lawgiver remained unsullied, the law unimpaired, and the moral system uninjured, then might such a thing have been done. *If there had been a law given*, (any scheme of religion without atonement,) *which could have given life*, (i. e. to transgressors,) *verily righteousness should have been by the law*. Gal. iii. 21.

If the mere declarations of our holy Sovereign, asserting his abhorrence of man's apostacy, after it had taken place, would have answered all the ends of the infliction of punishment, in support of government, then might sin have been forgiven without an atonement. But who can believe that mere declarations would have answered the same purpose as punishment, in preserving the honor of the broken law? If they would, why might not the penalty have been dispensed with in the very formation of the law; and mere declarations have supplied its place? But no such law was ever enacted, or thought of, by any government, either human or divine.

Moral means, let it be remembered, are indispensably necessary for the proper management of moral agents. The power which God has to work directly on their hearts does not set aside this necessity. Among the means for regulating the concerns of the moral system, a good law is absolutely requisite; and a penalty subjoined, as we have already seen, is essential to the very existence of law: nor can the law con-

tinue to be respected, or be of use in preserving order, as soon as it is seen that its violations are to be passed over unnoticed. The transgressors must be punished, unless something else can be done, which will exert as great and lasting an influence in securing respect for the law. Both these methods have been taken by the divine Lawgiver. He has punished many of the transgressors of his law, according to the threatenings he had denounced ; he has also provided an atoning sacrifice, which is designed to manifest his approbation of obedience and disapprobation of transgression, as clearly and emphatically as it is done by the punishment of transgressors.

Could men have been redeemed from punishment, by such corruptible things as silver and gold, the blood of Christ would not have been required. If an atonement, which cost no *suffering*, would have equally answered the purposes of moral government, the benevolence of the Supreme Ruler would have preferred it ; for he has solemnly declared, he takes no pleasure in pain, even that which is endured by his enemies. Ezek. xviii. 23. Had the mere *obedience* of Christ been sufficient to condemn our transgression of the law, nothing more would have been required to prepare the way for our forgiveness. But we are assured that *without shedding of blood there is no remission*. Heb. ix. 22. In the sinner's substitute there must be *suffering* as well as obedience. The scripture makes it as necessary that we should have a *suffering* Savior, as that we should have any Savior at all. Those sacrifices which were designed to shadow forth him that was to come, did not make their typical atonement without the endurance of pain. They suffered a violent death ; their blood was poured out at the bottom of the altar, and their flesh consumed by fire. The Redeemer, foretold by the prophets, was to be *wounded for our transgression and bruised for our iniquities*. Concerning the Messiah it was predicted that he should *be cut off, but not for himself*. Isa. liii. 5. Dan. ix. 26. In expounding the things concerning himself he said, "Ought not Christ to have *suffered these things* ?" "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to *suffer*." Luke xxiv. 26, 46.

Suffering is made essential to an atonement for sin ; and yet mere suffering gives it no value. *Innocence* must be united with suffering. Obedience, though insufficient of itself, is nevertheless essential to atonement. The victims sacrificed under the law were all required to be without blemish : by which we are admonished, that no sufferings endured by a sinful being could make atonement for sin. The least moral defect in the Redeemer would have destroyed the efficacy of his expiatory sufferings, however great they might have been. But in him no such defect appeared. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. The apostle declares our redemption to be effected by "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Pet. i. 19.

Nor are *suffering* and *innocence*, when combined, sufficient to constitute an atonement for sin. They were both found in the typical sacrifices ; and yet these sacrifices were wholly inefficacious to accomplish this object. "For it is not possible," saith the Holy Ghost, "that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin." Heb. x. 4. The impossibility of their taking away sin, arises from their entire inade-



quacy to fix upon it a sufficient stigma, or afford a proper conviction to the subjects of moral government of God's determination, at all events, to sustain the honor of his violated law. Hence it was, that all which was endured by that immense number of victims, offered in sacrifice by divine appointment, during the four thousand years that preceded the coming of Christ, (though it constituted a great amount of suffering) could not make the least atonement for sin. They were the sufferings of irrational creatures, and therefore possessed no moral worth. Their use, even at the time of their being offered, was merely *typical*, pointing forward to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

The redemption system originated in the pure benevolence of God. It is designed, without doing any thing to lower down a respect for his laws or sully his glory, greatly to augment the happiness of the intelligent universe. This augmentation of happiness supposes not only, that the number of sufferers, but also the quantity of suffering, is diminished. The sufferings which, according to the threatenings of the law, were to have fallen on many, now fall on *one*. Had the guilty suffered in their own persons, their suffering must have continued forever; but the sufferings of our Redeemer were temporary, and were succeeded by joys immortal and full of glory.

That the display of God's indignation against sin, and determination to preserve from contempt the broken law, might be very emphatic, it became necessary that the humiliation of our Redeemer should be protracted through a course of years, and that, near its close, his sufferings should become exquisitely severe, and be accompanied with great ignominy. The grand purposes of an atonement would not have been answered by his death, had he died "the common death of all men." His *blood* must be shed—his death must be that of the *accursed*—he must be numbered with the transgressors, and in the capacity of a malefactor be condemned to die by the hand of justice. Heb. ix. 22. Gal. iii. 13. Luke xxii. 37, and xxiii. 32. They, for whose redemption he had become sponsor, were transgressors of the law of God, and were condemned to suffer as malefactors; and that indeed justly, for it was the due reward of their deeds. The sufferings of Christ, in the character of a criminal, were calculated to make a true representation of our character and ill desert, as they were viewed in the court of heaven. Yet, while the honor of the divine government required, that the sufferings of the sinner's Substitute should be both intense and humiliating, and that they should be adjudged by them who sat in Moses' seat, and confirmed by the civil power which then ruled over the earth, it was by no means necessary they should constitute an amount of misery equal to that from which he saves his people. Such a view of the matter would render the sufferings of the Redeemer very undesirable; since it would imply, that the atonement had procured no diminution of misery in the universe, but had only transferred it from the guilty to the innocent. It would also seem to intimate, that *misery*, rather than the establishment of law, was that in which the Supreme Ruler delighted.

We obtain no proper conceptions of the greatness of the atonement, merely by looking at *the bitterness of sufferings and the depth of ignominy*

which the Savior underwent. Had these sufferings and this ignominy been endured by a mere man, or by an incarnate angel, they would have fallen infinitely short of fixing a proper stigma on the sin of men. Concerning all such sufferings, as well as of the blood of bulls and goats, it might have been said, it is not possible they should take away sin. The deficiency in this case, would not consist in the sufferings endured, but in the want of moral worth in the sufferer. An adequate atonement for the sin of men, must be of such a nature as to be calculated to exert as great, salutary, and lasting an influence in supporting divine authority, as would be done by the infliction of that endless punishment which is threatened in the law. But who can believe that this could be done by the sufferings of any finite being—any mere creature?

The *Godhead* of our Redeemer is the thing which gives worth and consequence to his vicarious sufferings. “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit” (or, the Divinity that dwelt within him) “offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” Heb. ix. 14. His blood is called the blood of *God*; and God is said to have laid down his life for us. Acts xx. 28. 1 John, iii. 16. The sufferings of a *man*, even when they are confined to his animal nature, are regarded as the sufferings of a rational being, and not of a mere animal. Were a human being to sacrifice his own life in promoting some great and good object, how altogether different and superior would such a sacrifice be considered, to his giving up the life of his beast, to promote the same object. That intimate union between our soul and body, by which they are both made to constitute one person, is the thing which gives such value to our corporeal sufferings. If the personal union of the divine nature with the manhood of Christ be not brought into the account, the greatness of the atonement can not be seen. He who died to redeem us, is, without any hyperbole, an *infinite* personage. It is said of him, “He shall be exalted, and extolled, and be very high,” though “his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form than the sons of men.” Isa. lii. 13, 14. “Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is MY FELLOW, saith the Lord of hosts. Zech. xiii. 7. As “*he* thought it not robbery to be *equal* with God,” so the *Lord of hosts* acknowledges him to be his *fellow*, his equal. The *infiniteness* of the sufferer, is the thing which gives value to his sufferings. They who strip the Savior of his divinity, will either have no atonement in their theology, or none which they will much regard.

Those who are much affected by looking at the cross, are such as recognize in the crucified Redeemer the God who made them. Zec. xii. 10. Such see a great sight. What could be more wonderful or affecting than this; that He who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, should make himself of no reputation, and take upon him the form of a servant, and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; that by this means he might save those rebellious creatures whom he had a full right and power to punish. This was no pictured representation, nor visionary appearance; it was all reality. It was truly “God manifest in the flesh,” who laid down his life for us.

His pains were not a pretence, but real sufferings. His body was bruised, his soul was troubled, yea, both were agonized. The display of condescension, of compassion for sinners, of regard to righteousness, and opposition to sin, was nothing less than infinite.

“ Well might the sun in darkness hide,  
And shut his glories in,  
When God, the mighty Maker, died,  
For man, the creature's sin.”

The divinity of the Savior has already been asserted, and some of the texts by which it is proved have incidentally been referred to : but since it is manifest that the value of the atonement must chiefly depend on the greatness and dignity of the personage by whom it was made, it seems desirable that this topic should be more distinctly considered. And since there is no other place in this work where the Savior's divinity will so naturally be brought into view as under the present Article, I am unwilling to pass on till I have stated some of the heads of the arguments by which it is proved.

*First.* The proper deity of Christ is proved by the use of *divine names*. He is called “God”—“the mighty God”—“the great God”—“the true God”—“God over all,” &c. John i. 1. Isa. ix. 6. Tit. ii. 13. 1 John, v. 20. Rom. ix. 5. Christ is also called “Lord”—“Lord of lords”—“Lord of all”—“Lord of glory,” &c. Eph. iv. 5. Rev. xix. 16. Acts x. 36. 1 Cor. ii. 8. There is no name applied to the true God which is more peculiar than *JEHOVAH*. This occurs with great frequency in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament ; and among these there are instances where it manifestly intends the Savior who was to die to redeem his people from their iniquities. Jer. xxiii. 6. Mal. iii. 1—3. Isa. vi. 5, compared with John xii. 41.

*Secondly.* The real divinity of the Savior is made known to us in the scriptures, by their ascribing to him *infinite attributes*. He is *eternal*, being “the First and the Last, without beginning of days or end of life.” He is *omnipresent*, being in every part of the earth, yea, on earth and in heaven, at the same time ; *omniscient*, “searching the reins and hearts” of men ; *omnipotent*, having “all power in heaven and earth ;” and *immutable*, being “the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Micah v. 7. Matt. xviii. 20. John iii. 13, and xxi. 17. Rev. ii. 23. Matt. xxviii. 18. Heb. xiii. 8.

*Thirdly.* To the Savior are ascribed *divine works*, as well as names and attributes. Creation and providence are his works. “By him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible—and by him all things consist.” Col. i. 16, 17. The renewal of the hearts of men is a work peculiar to God ; and yet it is attributed to King Messiah. To him it is said, “Thy people shall be willing in the day of *thy power*.” Ps cx. 3. Judging the world is the appropriate work of the omniscient God. “God is judge *himself*.” Ps. l. 6. He is distinguished from all others by being called *the Judge of all the earth* : and yet we are assured, that this infinitely arduous work is to be performed by him who died on the cross : “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. 2 Cor. v. 10.



*Fourthly.* That *supreme love* and regard which are claimed from us, to be exercised towards God, as due to him, and him alone, we are required to give to Christ, without the least hesitation or reserve. That which reconciled the holy apostle to be still longer kept from the full enjoyment of Christ in heaven, appears to have been a hope that he might yet do something more to serve him on the earth: "For me to live is Christ," i. e. I have no other object for which I desire to live. *Serving Christ* is spoken of as the proper contrast of living to ourselves, when it is said, "That they that live, (i. e. the life of the new man,) should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto *him that died for them and rose again.*" 2 Cor. v. 15. When Christ forbids us supremely to love our property, our relations, and ourselves, he proposes no higher substitute for this supreme love than himself. *He that loveth father or mother more than—*(if he had not been himself a divine person he must have said) *more than God*; but now he says, *more than ME, is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than ME, is not worthy of me.* Again he says, "Whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it." Matt. x. 37, and xvi. 25.

*Fifthly.* The *religious worship* which we are required to render to him, who "by himself purged our sins, and who has sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high," proves him to be, in the truest sense, the Lord our God; "for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." The inspired writings assure us, not only that Christ was worshipped, and that his followers in every place called on his name; but also that every knee is required to bow and every tongue confess to him. It is enjoined on creatures of the highest order to unite in this worship. "When he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." Matt. xxviii. 17. 1 Cor. i. 2. Phil. ii. 9—11. Heb. i. 6.

When all the proofs, which the scriptures can furnish under each of these heads, are examined; and when all these heads of proof are combined together, they constitute a manifold cord, that is not easily broken. They produce an argument in favor of the real Godhead of the Redeemer, which is full, and to the humble mind, abundantly satisfactory.

It may, however, be said by some, "there is another class of texts which represent the Redeemer to be a created and dependent being." Do such intend to intimate, that the scriptures contradict themselves? If so, they cannot believe them to be the word of God. But it should be remembered, that in this work I am reasoning out of the scriptures, with those who have already become convinced of their divine authority. If holy men spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, then the scriptures are not contradictory, but harmonious.

I do not pretend to deny that names, properties, and acts, which imply dependence, are applied to our Redeemer. And why should they not be; seeing that in one of his natures he had a beginning, and in that nature is now as dependent on God as any of the children of Adam. When dependent names, properties, and acts are attributed to him, they apply to his dependent nature: and when those which are independent are applied to him, they belong to his underived and independent na-

ture. If but one class were applied to him, there would be no proof of his possessing more than one nature; but now, because these two classes of names, properties, and acts, are attributed to him, there is full proof that he is possessed of two natures, which are as distinct from each other as infinite is from finite. He is "Immanuel, God with us:" "God manifest in the flesh." He may therefore with propriety be called the GOD-MAN. When the twofold nature of Christ is once seen, no discord appears between the two classes of texts referred to; but, on the contrary, a very pleasing harmony. They unite their testimony to make known the whole of the mediatorial character.

It was not only needful that the divine Redeemer should assume a finite and dependent nature, to prepare him to become an atoning sacrifice, but it was necessary that he should assume the nature of the very race which he was to redeem. Therefore he took not on him the nature of angels, but the nature of man. As the children, whom God gave to him to redeem, were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same. Heb. ii. 14—17. By this means he became, not merely by divine constitution, but by birth and consanguinity, their kinsman and brother; and thereby qualified to redeem their lost inheritance. The Mediator between God and men, is such a Days-man that he can lay his hand on us both. He is possessed of a nature truly divine; he is also a man, a descendant from the common parents of the race, and proves that he is not ashamed to own this intimate relation to us, by calling us his *brethren*. Heb. ii. 11.

The Redeemer assumed our nature as that of *men*, but not as of *sinful* men. For had he taken the least part with us in our disaffection to the divine government, it would totally and forever have disqualified him to be an atoning sacrifice for our sins; nor would his intercessions in our behalf had any prevalence with God.

*Intercession* has an immediate connexion with atonement. Under the law, the high priest first offered the oblation which made atonement for his own and the sins of the people, and then went into the most holy place to make intercession before the mercy-seat. So Jesus, our great high priest, when he had offered up himself as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, did by his own blood enter into the holy place to make intercession for us. His atonement was made and finished before he left the earth; but the intercession which he began here, is carried on now he is in heaven, and that without intermission; "seeing he ever liveth to make intercession." Heb. vii. 25. Had he made no atonement for sin, he could not have made intercession for sinners. Isa. liii. 12. His bearing their sin in such a sense as to number him with the transgressors, served to make a joint exhibition, of strong love to them, and perfect approbation of the law they had broken. Now his intercession for them, appears at once an expression of unfeigned good will to *them*, and of delight in the character and government of Him whose authority they have disregarded. He can plead for them, without pleading against God. He can ask that their sins may be blotted out, without exciting a suspicion that he would prefer a repeal of the law which they have transgressed. It is in connexion with his *advocacy*, that he is called "Jesus Christ the *righteous*." 1 John, ii. 1. Intercession for transgressors can not be more

extensive than the atonement ; but the merits of the atonement may be more unlimited than the Redeemer's intercessory prayers. He may be a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and yet pray not for the salvation of the whole world, but for theirs only who are given him out of the world. John xvii. 9.

The doctrine of atonement, as laying the only foundation for the forgiveness of sins, is confirmed by the whole current of revelation. Much, very much, of the Old Testament must appear frivolous, if this doctrine be overlooked. And as to the New, it evidently knows nothing, as the hope of lost man, but Jesus Christ, and *him crucified*. Both Testaments give this doctrine a prominent place. This only hope of our apostate race first breaks upon our view in the same chapter in which we find the record of our ruin by the fall. Here, in this early part of the inspired volume, the decree is declared, that the woman should have a seed to bruise the head of the serpent ; and also, that this promised seed, in subduing the serpent, should receive a bruise upon his own heel. Soon after the fall, we find typical sacrifices offered to God, and accepted by him. In the sacrifice of clean beasts, offered by Noah immediately after the flood, the Lord smelled a sweet savor ; in consequence of which he promised, he would not again curse the ground any more for man's sake. Gen. viii. 21. Much of the established worship of the ancient church, consisted in offering those sacrifices which were typical atonements. If the doctrine of an atonement for sin is diffused through the scriptures of the Old Testament, its conspicuity is still greater in the New. Leave out of the gospel the doctrine of atonement for sin, by the mediation and death of the Son of God, and that which remains would resemble the solar system, were the sun to be stricken from its centre. This doctrine is clearly revealed in the four Gospels, and in the Acts of the Apostles ; and with additional clearness and fullness in the apostolic epistles. The epistle to the Hebrews is very much designed to show, that Christ crucified is the spirit of the Old Testament, as well as the grand subject of the New. Here we learn that all the worth of the sacrificial system of the Old Testament consisted in its serving to shadow forth that one sacrifice, by which God hath forever perfected them that are sanctified ; and by which alone the transgressions under the first testament could be forgiven. Heb. x. 14, and ix. 15.

No doctrine of the Bible has more abundant support than the *deity* of Christ, and the absolute necessity and complete acceptableness of his sacrifice for the sin of men. If the word of the God of truth can not contradict itself, there is not a single passage which stands in opposition to this doctrine. Will it be pretended that there is a single text which declares that Christ has not made atonement or propitiation for our sins ? I know there are texts which speak of him in the character of a *teacher*. On this account he is represented as sustaining the office of a Prophet. But is this saying any thing in contradiction to his *priestly* office ? Is he not also called a Priest—a great High Priest, who offered himself for the sins of the people ? The priestly office of the Redeemer, (which includes the offering himself an oblation for sin, and making intercession,) is more particularly noticed in the inspired writings, and more largely explained, than the prophetic or teaching



office. His being represented as a teaching Prophet, is not saying that he is not also an atoning Priest. As well might we say that those scriptures which assert his priesthood, disprove his prophetic office, and tell us that we are not to receive him in the character of a teacher. Why not receive him in all the characters he assumes? He, in distinction from all others, is "the CHRIST," i. e. "the ANOINTED"—because that in Him meet all those distinguished offices, to which men were consecrated by an unction with oil. He is fully able to sustain in his own person the three-fold office of Prophet, Priest, and King. He is represented as the great and only perfect *pattern* for our imitation; yet this by no means implies that his advent was solely, or principally, designed to give us an example of obedience. What is there incompatible in the representations, which suppose him to be at once the Lamb of God, to take away our sins by the sacrifice of himself; and our example of active obedience and patient suffering, that we should follow in his steps? 1 Pet. ii. 21—24. What if God, in sending his Son into the world, designed by his resurrection to illustrate the doctrine of a general resurrection of the dead, and give a pledge to his followers that they should be raised up in glory? this would not furnish the shadow of an argument to prove, that to make an atonement for sin was not also an object of his mission; or that it was not an object of superior importance.

Some, perhaps, will say that the scriptures give contradictory statements in relation to the *extent* of the atonement. It may, however, in one part of the scriptures be said to be made for *all men*, and in another, to be made only for those who will be actually saved by it; and yet these representations be harmonious. A thing is done either for the end for which it is *adapted*, or for that in which it was determined it should actually result. "The commandment was ordained unto life;" not because it actually secured the eternal life of man, but because it was adapted to this end. The law was the first provision which was made to secure the holiness and happiness of our race; and the atonement is the last provision which will ever be made to secure the same desirable object. The first was made for all, and none were benefited; the last was made for all, and some are made partakers of the benefit. There is not, as I can perceive, any more impropriety in saying, that God, by the death of Christ, designed to make provision for the salvation of all mankind, than to say, the covenant of works was ordained to prevent man's apostacy.

That Christ died for all men, in every sense in which he died for those whom he will actually save, will not be pretended; but that there is an important sense in which he died for all, I think, can hardly be disputed. Besides those passages which speak of his *dying for all, tasting death for every man*, and being a *propitiation for the sins of the whole world*, there are others which give us the same views of the extent of the atonement, while it seems not to be their express design to do it. One of this class of texts is this: "Denying the Lord who bought them, and shall bring on themselves swift destruction." 2 Pet. ii. 1. These men, it appears, were bought, though never saved. See also Romans xiv. 15.

The commission of the unpardonable sin, implies, that the subjects

of it were once in a state where they could have obtained pardon. 1 John, v. 16. If an apostate has committed some particular sin, since he became an apostate, which is declared to be the thing that excludes him forever from receiving a pardon, it necessarily supposes that he has been in a state of merciful probation. I will cite one more of this class of passages : "Because we thus judge, that if one *died for all*, then were *all dead*." 2 Cor. v. 14. Here the doctrine of universal depravity, seems to be argued from that of universal atonement ; the truth of the latter is therefore taken for granted.

What can be meant, some may ask, by an atonement provided for those who fail of receiving its benefits ? I do not see why it is so difficult to understand what this means. May not a price be put into the hand of a fool to get wisdom, though he has no heart to improve it ? An atonement provided for all men, must suppose it to be great enough for all. True, it may be replied, the atonement of Christ is great enough for all the sinners in the universe, not excepting the fallen angels. An atonement for all men, I would add, must suppose all to be put into a salvable state ; which is not true in relation to the angels that sinned. The Redeemer took not on him the nature of angels, but the nature of men. To men he has made an indiscriminate offer of the benefits of his death, but to the apostate angels, legions of whom were thrown in his way, when he tabernacled in the flesh, he made no such offers. Instead of inviting them to come to him, he drove them from his presence.

The atonement prevents the penalty of the law from remaining an effectual barrier to man's obtaining the divine favor. If it is a provision for the whole race of man, the penalty of the law now presents no insuperable obstacle to the eternal blessedness of a single sinner, any more than it did to innocent creatures under the covenant of works. Concerning some of these it was foreseen, that by transgression they would fall under its condemning power ; and concerning some of our race it is foreseen, that through unbelief they will continue under it. But neither foreknowledge nor purpose concerning creatures under the covenant of works, or under the means of grace, does in the least degree diminish the fullness of the provision made for their blessedness. A general provision for the happiness of creatures under the covenant of works, implies the plan to be such that it needed only to be acceded to by all, and all would have been safe ; and a general atonement for this fallen world implies the same, namely, that our yielding to the terms of reconciliation would secure to us all its unspeakable benefits. The penalty of the law necessarily remains on every transgressor, until he accepts the terms of mercy ; but now it is not so properly the penalty of the law, as his own wilful unbelief, which stands in the way of his future blessedness.

Christ is the Lamb which God has provided for the sin of this fallen world. Under the typical dispensation, the man who had committed a sin, which could be expiated by a sacrifice, was required to bring an offering to the altar. This was considered as exclusively his own, being offered for *his* sin. Some of these offerings were provided by particular families, and were designed solely for them ; some for particular cities, and some for the whole nation of Israel. See Lev. viii.

14, and xvi. 5 : Deut. xxi. 1—9. But Christ is “the Lamb of God.” No man has had any part in providing this offering. Nor is it an offering for any particular sin or sinner ; nor for any particular nation ; but is designed for all nations and all sinners. It is sufficient to cleanse from all kinds of sin, and to cleanse all sinners. 1 John, i. 7 : 1 Tim. i. 15. All mankind have a right to make use of this one all-sufficient atonement. They not only have a right, but it is their bounden duty to do it. Now if by means of the death of Christ, mankind at large are placed in a state of merciful probation, have a space given them to repent, have the offer of life, enjoy the prayers of the church, and other means of grace, not excepting the strivings of the Spirit ; and if God stands ready to remove the sentence of condemnation from every one who returns to him through Jesus Christ ; may we not with propriety say, the atonement is not limited, but general ?

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

This Article has a manifest agreement with those which precede it. It agrees with the one which stands next before it ; where it was shown, that in the apostacy which has taken place among the intelligent creatures of God, the whole race of Adam is involved. If sin had not entered the world, it is certain that no place could have been found in the system of theology for such a doctrine as atonement. But it is an incontrovertible fact, that sin has entered and overspread the world ; and therefore an atonement was needed to lay a foundation for the least gleam of hope to any of the human race.

We have seen that all sin is of the nature of rebellion against the infinitely glorious God, and that on this account it is a moral evil of unlimited magnitude. In perfect harmony with this view of the immense evil of sin, is the greatness of that atonement which has been made for its removal. As the evil of sin is infinite, so the atonement is also infinite. An eternal punishment, inflicted on the sinner, will for ever be disclosing to created minds more and more of the abhorrence which God has towards his evil character ; and the same will be the effect of an *infinite* atonement. As created minds shall continue to expand through eternal ages, they will have increasing discoveries of its greatness, provided it be infinite, but not otherwise. Both the punishment of sin, and the atonement made for it by the death of Christ, declare it to be an evil infinitely great.

Some may think, the harmony between these two Articles is not perfect, unless the atonement is represented to be co-extensive with the apostacy, including fallen angels as well as fallen men. The apostacy of creatures, however, lays God under no obligation to provide redemption for them. If the law is, what it is declared to be, holy, just, and good, it might take its course on all transgressors, and the throne of God be guiltless. It is not therefore necessary, in order to harmonize this with the preceding Article, that the atonement should be made for the fallen angels ; nor indeed for the whole of Adam’s race. But it appears to be the testimony of scripture, that while Christ is not the Savior of *devils*, he is, in an important sense, “the Savior of *all men* ;”



though in a more special sense, the Savior of *them that believe*. He did not die for the fallen angels ; but “by the grace of God he tasted death for *every man*.”

This Article has a very manifest agreement with the *third*. The atonement magnifies the law and makes it honorable. It declares with a voice emphatic enough to be heard through the whole dominion of the Most High, “TILL HEAVEN AND EARTH PASS, ONE JOT OR ONE TITTLE SHALL IN NO WISE PASS FROM THE LAW, TILL ALL BE FILLED.” The precepts of the law which we have disregarded, our Savior perfectly obeyed ; and the curse of the law, which by our disobedience we had incurred, he voluntarily bore in his own body on the tree ; thus giving a practical attestation to the goodness of the precept, and to the justice of the penalty. When it comes to be known through the universe how great a personage this Sufferer is ; that he is the only begotten Son of God ; and that his sufferings were designed to make a public expression of the high value which God sets on his law, it will be as distinctly understood, that the law is not to be repealed or altered, as if no transgressor had ever been pardoned.

But still it may be objected by some, that between this and the law there is no harmony, since the law denounces its threatenings against the transgressor alone, declaring, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” We know very well that the law makes its claims for obedience on each subject of divine government, and points its threatenings against the transgressor and him alone. Pardoning mercy dispensed through the atonement of Christ is not the law itself, and yet it is in no degree repugnant to it.

The atonement acknowledges, and very strikingly exhibits the same great principles of moral government which appear in the law ; such as these : That, as intelligent beings, we are under obligation to possess a holy character ; that God our Creator has an undoubted right to supreme dominion over us ; that the law which he has promulgated is worthy of himself, and obligatory on all his intelligent creatures ; that the breach of this law has subjected us to suffer its penalty as the due reward of our deeds. The atonement also makes it appear, that, according to the spirit of his own law, God loves his enemies, and that he is willing to do every thing, which can consistently be done, to afford them the help they need in their guilty and wretched circumstances. But the mediatorial system clearly shows that he will not tarnish one of his glorious attributes for the sake of displaying another ; that he is unwilling to afford relief to transgressors at the expense of that law, which is the transcript of his moral perfections, and the only solid basis of order, peace, and felicity, through his extensive and enduring kingdom.

Which of these great principles is denied or obscured by the gospel atonement ? “Do we make void the law through faith ? God forbid : yea, we establish the law.” Rom. iii. 31. What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God could effect by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. The law was never before so magnified as by the life and death of our Redeemer.

Still it may be demanded, whether it be not inconsistent with all the principles of law and righteousness, that the guilty should on any account

whatever be cleared. To this difficulty it may be replied, the guilty are not cleared. There is quite a difference between *clearing* and *pardoning*. Clearing supposes innocence in relation to the crime alleged, but pardon implies guilt; and pardon through an infinite atonement, no more conceals or connives at that guilt, than if the penalty were to be inflicted. The doctrine of atonement, rightly understood, implies no such thing as an interchange either of character or desert between Christ and sinners. It does not suppose Him to be sinful and ill deserving; nor them to be innocent and meritorious. Pains are taken by the sacred writers to keep in full view His perfect purity and worthiness, and their sinfulness and ill desert. When the sinner comes to plead for exemption from punishment, even in the name of the Lord his righteousness, he is to come to "*the throne of grace*," crying, "God be *merciful* to me a *sinner*."

It ought also to be remembered, that the Redeemer was not compelled to become our substitute. The undertaking was, on his part, altogether voluntary. In view of this very thing he declares, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." Justice imposed no obligation upon him to sacrifice his innocent life for our guilty lives; but why should an objection be raised against the government of God, because he was permitted to do it? Who thinks of implicating a human government, because it allows a man of wealth to pay the debt of a bankrupt, when he is prompted to it by his own benevolent feelings? An objector will say, there is a great difference between paying another's debt, and atoning for his sin. There is no essential difference in that point of view, in which this subject presents the matter, namely, as to any injustice done to the substitute. Why is it not as consistent to permit one to sacrifice his *ease*, to relieve the distresses of the wretched, as to sacrifice his *property* for this end? But how, it will be said, could an innocent person be hated and punished? Jesus Christ was never hated by his Father; nor was he, strictly speaking, ever punished. Punishment, in the most proper sense, is natural evil inflicted on an offender, to manifest displeasure at the moral evil of which he has been guilty; and for the purpose of preserving from contempt the rule which has been disregarded. The natural evil which our Redeemer suffered, was not intended to manifest any disapprobation of *him*, but of *us*; and yet because it was designed, as really as proper punishment, to fix a stigma on sin, and to preserve the violated law from contempt, it is called *the curse of the law*. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." The atonement of Christ is not represented as having any effect to change God's feelings of disapprobation towards the rebellion of his creatures. Without an atonement he exercises the love of good will towards the most rebellious. This led him to provide that atonement which has paved the way for the manifestation of his benevolent feelings towards them in effecting a change in their hearts. This being done he can delight in their renovated character, and through the mediation of his Son he can establish with them an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David. Who can raise one solid objection against the mediatorial scheme? The good which it directly accomplishes is immense. Witness that great multitude which no man can number, redeemed from

the earth by the blood of the cross. The benefit which these receive is great beyond conception. And it is conferred in such a way as to do nothing to weaken their confidence in the character and government of the Most High ; on the contrary, it greatly strengthens it. The same appears to be true concerning the holy angels, who have the very best opportunity to observe the administration of the divine government in different parts of the universe. And have we not reason to conclude that even the *fallen* angels, by means of the work of redemption, have a deeper conviction planted in their depraved minds, that the God, whom they hate, ought to receive their love ? When they saw Him who came to redeem us from iniquity, they acknowledged him to be “the Holy One of God.” Mark i. 24.

If the work of redemption had a tendency to unhinge government and prostrate law, it would be an act of *injustice to the moral system* ; but if the Supreme Ruler has taken effectual measures to prevent these evils, it is most unreasonable to oppose the displays of his grace. In displaying his grace, he dispenses with the exercise of *distributive*, but not of *public* justice. If justice is done to the public, i. e. if something is done which secures the public interest against all the mischievous consequences, which otherwise might result from dispensing with the infliction of punishment, according to the rules of distributive justice, the subjects of government have no cause of complaint. It would imply malicious feelings towards offenders, were their fellow subjects to insist on their being treated according to the rules of distributive justice, when public justice would receive no injury by their forgiveness. When the laws take their course on offenders, the thing, with which benevolent minds are gratified, is not the pain they endure, but the support which is thereby given to just authority.

Nothing can be more harmonious than this and the two Articles with which our series commenced. In the *first* of these we considered the existence of Jehovah—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The atonement (the subject of the present Article) shows us that the doctrine of the Trinity lies very much at the foundation of all our hopes, since it made way for the work of redemption to be effected by the incarnation of one of those divine Persons.

Our *second* Article presents to us the eternal God, making the best and most durable display of his infinite perfections in his works of creation and providence. The most important particular in the work of providence, is the provision of an atonement for the sinful children of Adam. Here are his glorious perfections remarkably displayed. When it is said, *God is love*, his whole moral perfection is expressed in one word. And when it is further said, “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him,” it is implied, that this infinite love is most illustriously displayed in the atonement, which he has provided for our sins by the death of his Son. Here those attributes, which seemed at variance, are sweetly reconciled. “Mercy and truth are met together ; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” Ps. lxxxv. 10. By means of the vicarious sufferings of the Redeemer we are shown, that stern justice is not malicious hatred ; also, that mercy is quite another thing than indifference to the support



of a righteous government. When we become acquainted with this doctrine, we perceive at once that the sufferings of the Redeemer were not the effect of an indiscriminate wrath which assails every thing in its way. On the contrary, we see that these sufferings were appointed, for a holy purpose, by him who is possessed of the attributes of justice, mercy, and wisdom, in the most unlimited degree. When God sends the wicked to a deserved punishment, he exhibits no feelings which he wishes to conceal from his creatures; he is not ashamed of punitive justice. He proclaims it openly, "To me belongeth *vengeance*." And when he laid our iniquity on his beloved Son, he manifested the same feelings. Both are benevolent exhibitions of his opposition to sin, but the latter excels in glory.\*

There is no exhibition of the character of God, in all the scriptures, which has drawn forth such severe remarks from unbelievers, as that relating to substitution and an expiatory sacrifice for sin. They seem to imagine the gospel atonement represents God as full of malicious revenge, which can be pacified with nothing but such an *amount of suffering*, either of the guilty or innocent. But will not infidels be candid enough to acknowledge, that there is a wide difference between the execution of a legal penalty, for the purpose of supporting that law which is essential to the preservation of the order and happiness of society, and the wreaking of that selfish revenge which prostrates law, and disturbs the public tranquillity? If the penalty of a law can be executed in consistency with universal good will, why must the requisition of an atonement, to pave the way for the pardon of sin, be considered as a display of maliciousness? Neither the pains threatened to transgressors, nor those which have been inflicted on their innocent Substitute, express the least degree of selfish revenge. But those which have been inflicted on their Substitute, who is none other than the dearly beloved Son of the Father, seem to be calculated, beyond any thing else, to remove all suspicions of that unworthy revenge which is gratified with the infliction of pain.

It is worthy of particular notice, that the very thing which the God of the scriptures has pointed out, as the highest proof of the greatness and disinterestedness of his love, should be considered by deists as fixing such a foul blot on his character, as to set aside his claims to divine honors. "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not."

\* If the glory of God is more displayed in saving sinners through the atonement, than in their being punished according to the threatening of the law, why, some may say, are not all saved? To this seeming difficulty it may be replied, that of two things in creation and providence, we may say, that one excels the other in glory, without saying it was foolish that the other had any existence. In the natural world the sun has a pre-eminence over the moon. It has more lustre, and displays the glory of the Creator to a greater degree. Yet the Creator is more glorified by his making one sun and one moon, than he would have been by making two suns, and no moon. Important purposes will be answered by the continuance of moral and natural evil in the system. The deformity of sin, the beauty of holiness, and the great and unmerited favor of salvation from sin and ruin, will more strikingly appear. The penalty of the law's being executed on the impenitent, will forever reflect light on the doctrine of atonement.

## REMARKS.

1. Among fallen creatures those are mercifully distinguished who are provided with an *atonement*. Sin destroys all the moral beauty of an intelligent creature, and incurs a penalty which, if it be executed, will render him most wretched through an interminable duration. How dreadful the thought, to be for ever a loathsome and wretched criminal, shut up in the prison of divine government, abhorred of God and all holy beings, and at the same time devoid of any self respect. What favor can be shown to creatures thus fallen and ruined, equal to that of providing a way for their regaining the lost image and friendship of their Creator? The apostates who receive this favor are distinguished advantageously, and mercifully too; because good, great good is received, where the greatest evil was deserved. The atonement is not provided to help out the law, as if this were incomplete without that. The law, viewed by itself, furnishes means for a perfect system of administration. If therefore such as have fallen by the law, are provided with an atonement, it is all *mercy*. Brethren of the human race! let us admire that wonderful display of goodness, by which the Creator has made us to differ from the fallen angels. We were involved in one common apostacy with them; but an atonement he has provided exclusively for us. Could we but see how ruined and wretched are our circumstances, the relief brought us by the atonement would not be lightly esteemed.

2. We can now see why the rejection of the atonement is represented to be pre-eminently the sin which shuts us out of heaven. Certain it is that such is the scriptural representation: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" The atonement has made provision for all sin to be removed and pardoned: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." Let our sins be ever so many and great, they will not ruin us, provided we accept of this provision which has been made for our redemption. It is therefore the rejection of this glorious provision, rather than our other sins, which ultimately proves our ruin. Under the light of the gospel, we are not so properly condemned to suffer the pains of the second death, because we have transgressed God's law, as because we have rejected his Son. "He that believeth not shall be damned." "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins."

## ARTICLE VI.

IN VIEW OF THE ATONEMENT, SALVATION IS FREELY OFFERED TO EVERY MAN, AND MAY BECOME HIS, ON HIS ACCEPTANCE OF THE OFFER.

A PROVISION being made for the forgiveness of sin, the way is prepared for salvation to be freely offered to sinners. The invitation is given, *Come, for all things are now ready.* The mere provision of an atonement, does not place us in a state of forgiveness: for though the provision could not be more ample, the children of Adam are still in rebellion, and the wrath of God abideth on them. John iii. 36. And it must abide on them, until the terms of reconciliation are complied with. It was not possible that any thing should be done, that could reconcile a God of holiness to such of his rebellious creatures as go on still in their trespasses. Ps. lxxviii. 21. The gospel is infinitely gracious; and yet it contains *conditions*; conditions which must be complied with, else its salvation can never be enjoyed. On the prescribed conditions, which are invariably the same, the salvation is proffered to every man, and will be secured to each, the moment he yields his consent to them.

Salvation (as we now use the word) does not so properly mean a deliverance from sin, as from its deserved punishment. When any one accepts the proffered salvation, it supposes deliverance from the dominion of sin is begun; and we know that where it is begun, there is an assurance of its ultimate completion: but the salvation that is offered to those who comply with the terms, is a deliverance from the bitter consequences of sin.

Some may think, that conditions have no place in a free salvation. But in truth, the gospel, as well as the law, has its conditions, and must have them; unless the Supreme Ruler had consented to an entire relinquishment of his authority over his revolted subjects. A *gift*, as well as wages, may be bestowed on conditions. You may require a beggar to *ask*, as the condition of receiving his alms, as well as require the laborer to *work* to earn his wages. The word *conditions* does not necessarily suppose the existence of *merit* in the man who complies with them. It is, for aught I can see, just as proper to talk of the conditions of the covenant of grace, as of the covenant of works. In the covenant of grace, asking is made the condition of receiving unmerited favors; repenting and believing are conditions of forgiveness and acceptance in Christ, as much as perfect obedience to the righteousness of the law is the condition of acceptance in the covenant of works. But you will say, is not prayer itself, together with repentance and faith, the gift of God? Grant it; yet this does not preclude their being conditions of receiving other blessings. Though it is by the grace of God that we are enabled to pray, repent, and believe; yet prayer, faith,



and repentance, are our acts, as much as the pure worship and obedience of sinless angels are their acts. Nor is their obedience any more independent of divine help than ours.

In spreading out this Article before the reader, these four things will be particularly considered : I. The favorable or merciful conditions on which salvation is offered. II. The extensiveness of the offer. III. The variety of ways in which it is presented. IV. What is implied in its being accepted.

I. Let us look at *the mercifulness of the conditions* on which salvation is offered. Though merit is excluded, yet something is to be done on our part, to give us an interest in the salvation of the gospel. The conditions proposed are not designed to throw any unnecessary embarrassments in our way, or to render salvation at all difficult to such as pant for a release from "sin's old yoke and Satan's chain." Far otherwise ; the conditions are such as show the salvation to be wholly of grace ; such as bring eternal life within the reach of ruined sinners—moral bankrupts. They bring this infinite good within the reach of every man. *Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.* All the blessings procured by the atonement are as free and unexpensive as water ; and no one who is willing to receive them will remain destitute. If the atonement had been made for some particular sins, but not for all manner of sins, yours might be a hopeless case. Should a wealthy man undertake to pay a certain per centage on the debts of his impoverished neighbor, this might nevertheless be so inadequate to his real necessities as to leave him still in the *debtor's jail*. But should this wealthy friend kindly offer the payment of all his debts, and leave nothing for him to do, except to feel and express his obligation for the kindness, he could not say, the provision did not fully meet his wants. Let me suppose another case, which, on some accounts, will more resemble the one we wish to illustrate : A man has committed a crime that exposes him to a lasting confinement in the *criminal's jail*. Some compassionate individual has interposed, and made such an honorable satisfaction to the law, that he can now be liberated from his confinement, as soon as he shall heartily approve of the law, and disapprove of his own conduct in the violation of it. Would not this be proclaiming liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ? Difficulties might still remain to prevent his enjoying the benefit of this interposition in his behalf ; for he may have no generous relentings for his crime, nor any willingness to regard in future the law that has condemned him to imprisonment. But all those difficulties which arise from a perverse and unyielding spirit, he ought not to reckon among the things that make the conditions of his release appear to him hard. These moral difficulties notwithstanding, it can with propriety be said, the terms are brought down to his circumstances ; they are as low as they possibly could be. Were the least sum of money to be required of the bankrupt, or the least merit of the criminal, the terms would not be sufficiently low to bring deliverance within their reach ; for the bankrupt has no money, and the criminal no merit. Nor would it be in the power of the best feelings of heart which they might now possess, to remove difficulties of this nature.

With these illustrations in view, I am prepared to say, *the terms of*

*gospel salvation are as low as possible* ; bringing deliverance, even from an eternal imprisonment, within every man's reach. The question, then, does not remain to be settled, whether provision shall be made, nor whether it shall be adequate to our wants. The provision is already made, and could not be more ample. There is therefore now no place for the inquiry, Who shall go for us up to heaven, or descend into the deep, or go over the sea, to bring us salvation ? for it is already brought, and is very nigh to us ; and assurance is given, that if we believe in our heart, and confess with our mouth, we shall be saved. Deut. xxx. 11—14. Rom. x. 6—9. Let us now consider,

II. The *extensiveness* of the gospel offer. It is made without any restriction. No individual is excepted. The death of Christ for the sin of the whole world, gives every sinner in the world a right to apply its benefits to himself. So the matter is represented in that well known text, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever believeth in him* should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16. When Christ refers to the case of the brazen serpent, to illustrate his being lifted up upon the cross, he declares this to be the express design of his crucifixion, "that *whosoever believeth in him* should not perish, but have eternal life." John iii. 14—16. The brazen serpent was the divinely appointed antidote for the bite of the fiery serpents to the whole camp of Israel. It was so effectual as not to fail in a single instance where it was made use of. It needed only to be looked upon, and the cure was wrought. And to bring it within the view of all, it was lifted up on a pole, and placed in the midst of the camp. In like manner, the Savior would have us consider his death on the cross, as the divinely appointed remedy for the venomous bite of that old serpent, the devil. Like the type, its design was not to *prevent*, but to *remove* the evil. And as in the case of the type, so here, this privilege is proffered to all without any discrimination. Is any one bitten with the fiery serpent ? let him look to the cross of Christ and be healed. If he should say, How do I know this privilege belongs to me ? I answer, You may know it belongs to *you*, because it belongs to *all*. Since the scriptures exhibit the death of Christ as a sacrifice for sin, without naming any individuals for whom he suffered ; and since they inform us, that *whosoever* believeth in him will receive the benefits of his death, the inference would be natural, that the offers of salvation are designed to be unlimited. But in a matter of so much consequence to our immortal interests, we are not left to depend on mere inference. That we are authorized to make the offer of eternal salvation to all the inhabitants of our fallen world, is exceedingly plain. Invitations to partake of this immense good are numerous ; and they are both *general* and *particular*.

First. They are *general*. What can be more general than this invitation of Wisdom ? "Unto you, O *men*, I call, and my voice is to the *sons of men*." Prov. viii. 4. That in this address, Christ (who is the Wisdom of God) uses the words *men* and *the sons of men*, in the most unrestricted sense, may be inferred from a passage in the prophecy of Isaiah, where he says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, *all the ends of the earth*." How could the invitation be more extensive than to embrace all the ends of the earth ?

*Jews* and *gentiles*, in scripture phrase, comprise all the tribes of Adam, and both these divisions of mankind are named in the invitation. Concerning the Jews there can surely be no question; for Christ tells us, *salvation is of the Jews*. The personal ministry of the Savior was confined to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and the apostles were required to begin their ministry at Jerusalem, making the first offer of the benefits of a Savior's death to those who had shed his blood; and then to extend the offer to sinners of all nations. Luke xxiv. 47—49. Paul gloried in being called "the apostle of the *gentiles*." To him the Redeemer appeared in a vision, when he was at Jerusalem, and said, "I will send thee far hence unto the *gentiles*." To them he was specially sent, that he might turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Acts xxii. 21, and xxvi. 18.

Secondly. The invitations of the gospel are *particular*. There is danger we shall imagine that an offer, which is made to the whole world, or to the whole nation, is not made to *ourselves*. To prevent this abuse of general offers, we are frequently addressed in our individual capacity. We are not only informed that Christ made a propitiation for the sins of "the whole world," but also, that he tasted death for *every man*. The commission to proclaim the news of salvation, which our Lord gave to his apostles, was particular as well as general. He commanded them to teach *all nations*, and to preach the gospel to *every creature*. In the parable of the marriage supper, the servants received this direction; "Go therefore into the highways, and *as many as ye shall find* bid to the marriage." Matt. xxii. 9. Their liberty to invite could not have been more unrestricted. Wherever they should find a fellow mortal, they had authority from their Master to present him with an invitation, the acceptance of which would secure to him blessings as lasting as eternity.

The gospel offer makes no distinction between the *sexes*; both are freely invited. We read that the apostles baptized both *men* and *women*; of course they must have preached the gospel to both. At Philippi Paul once preached to an audience wholly composed of females. Acts xvi. 13. *Youth* are very specially invited, yet not to the exclusion of the aged. "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth." "They that seek me *early* shall find me." Ecc. xii. i. Prov. viii. 17. But they who have idled away almost the whole of their probation, are still invited to go and work in the vineyard of God, with the promise that they too shall receive their penny. Matt. xx. 6, 7.

Men of *every rank* in society are presented with the gospel invitation. *Kings* and *judges* of the earth are called upon to kiss the Son, and experience the blessedness of those who put their trust in him: and *the poor* also have the gospel preached to them. Ps. ii. 10—12. Matt. xi. 5. The gospel proffers its blessings alike to the *learned* and the *unlearned*. Philosophers may become Christians, if they will but sit at the feet of Christ and hear his word; if they will become fools that they may be wise. 1 Cor. iii. 18.

The errors which men have adopted furnish no reason for withholding from them the offers of salvation. Every scheme of religion that is not evangelical, must be renounced when the gospel is embraced; but no scheme can be so false, as to exclude its devotees from a right



to come to the marriage supper of the Lamb. To this holy feast we are allowed to invite all the heretics and infidels of Christendom; also the Jews who are looking for a Messiah to come; and with them to invite the deluded Mahometans and idolatrous pagans.

We may invite men of *every character*, as well as of every creed. We may invite the pharisee, who is full of self-righteous religion, and with him the man who makes no pretension to any religion. They both equally need a Savior's righteousness; and both should be urged to accept of it. *Immoral* and also *moral* men need the salvation of Christ; and we have the same authority for offering it to the one class as to the other. He declared that he came to call *sinners* to repentance. If their sins are as scarlet, he can make them white as snow; if they are red like crimson, he can make them like wool. His blood cleanseth from all sin. With such an all-sufficient Savior in view, no degree of moral pollution presents an insuperable obstacle to the sinner's salvation. Let him forsake his way and his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, yea, he will abundantly pardon. Isa. lv. 7.

Hitherto we have considered the presentation of the gospel offer as a thing which God *allows* to be done, rather than that which he is zealously engaged should be done. But this is not disclosing the whole truth in relation to this subject. Further light will be reflected on it when we consider,

III. The *variety of ways* which God has taken to present and to secure the presentation of this gracious offer. He himself calls to us out of heaven, and points us to the Savior, saying, "This is my beloved Son, hear him." Mark ix. 7. The Son of God not only died for lost men, but preached the gospel to them with his own blessed lips. He invited them with great tenderness and earnestness to come to him for life. At a certain time he said to those who were about him, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. xi. 28. And since he went to heaven, he has sent them this kind invitation, "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." In presenting the offers of the gospel, the Holy Ghost takes a conspicuous part. "The Spirit says, Come." Rev. xxii. 17. God said to Noah before the flood, *My Spirit shall not always strive with man*. A threat to withdraw the Spirit from the impenitent, so that he shall no more strive with them, supposes that they are now striven with; and this striving implies, among other things, an offer of mercy. They who fail to accept this offer, are charged with resisting the Holy Ghost. Acts vii. 51. It appears, then, that each person in the glorious Trinity is employed in arresting the attention of an apostate world, and urging their acceptance of proffered grace. The written word is the voice of God; and by this he is constantly addressing all those to whom it comes, saying, "Turn you at my reproof; behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." Prov. i. 23.

There is another way which the God of all grace has taken to insure the extensive, permanent, and faithful presentation of the gospel offer, which ought to be distinctly noticed, as a striking proof of the deep

interest he takes in its success,—I refer to *the stated ministry of the word*. He has appointed that there should be a succession of men in his church, who shall separate themselves to this work, giving themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. These are appointed not only to feed the church, but also to seek the reconciliation of the world: “We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” 2 Cor. v. 20. It is the divine plan, that the men employed in this work should be able, pious and discreet; and that their number should be multiplied, until they shall be able to fulfil, to the utmost extent, the command to “preach the gospel to every creature,” making the offer of salvation to every son and daughter of Adam.

Nor is the liberty of presenting this gracious offer wholly confined to the commissioned heralds of salvation. Every man who has embraced it himself, ought to say to his unbelieving neighbor and brother, *Know the Lord*. Heb. viii. 11. The whole mystical bride, as well as the ministers of reconciliation, is expected to concur with the Spirit in presenting the invitation. “The Spirit and the *bride* say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come.” Rev. xxii. 17. It seems to be made the duty of every man, who hears what a great and merciful salvation has been provided for a fallen world, to spread the news, and call the attention of others to a subject which so nearly concerns them all. None who believe in the reality of gospel salvation, can doubt whether God has made it the duty of parents to present this subject to their children. He has always, in all his institutions, made the seeking of a *godly seed* a matter of primary importance.

Would all this pains be taken, to place before the children of men the provision which has been made for their redemption, if God were not ready to forgive such as accept the proffered mercy? Would the Father call to them out of heaven; would the Son have come to earth to address them; and would the Spirit press their consciences, if no door of mercy were opened to them, nor divine solicitude entertained in their behalf? Would Christ, besides enjoining it on all his disciples to pray and labor for the conversion of unbelievers, have appointed a succession of men to hold the office of his ambassadors, to beseech sinners to be reconciled to God, if his heart had not been engaged to effect their reconciliation?

IV. Let us now attend to this interesting inquiry, What is implied in the *acceptance* of the offer of salvation? Before giving a direct answer to the inquiry, suffer me to lay down three positions, the truth of which is made clear by the attention we have been called to pay to the freeness, extensiveness, and earnestness, with which the scriptures present the gospel offer. (1.) That every one who accepts the offer, will be accepted of God; he who complies with its conditions will be saved. “To him that knocketh it shall be opened.” The man who was driven from the wedding because he had not on the wedding garment, had not truly accepted the invitation which had been sent him: he had not complied with its reasonable conditions. Matt. xxii. 11—13. (2.) It is clear that every man has a right to accept the offer. The presentation of the invitation gives him a perfect right to accept it, though he has nothing to give in exchange for the good he is to receive.

He need not go about to establish his own righteousness, but is required, as a guilty creature, to submit to the righteousness of God. (3.) Holiness of heart is not made necessary, to give the sinner a right to accept the salvation of Christ. His accepting it is a holy act, therefore holiness is to be looked after as an evidence that he has accepted, but not as that prerequisite which gives him the right to accept. To him as a *mere sinner* the offer is made, and while he knows nothing better of himself than this, that he is one of the lost children of Adam, his warrant to accept the proffered mercy, is clear and indubitable. He is required even now to behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. John i. 29.

The invitation, "Ho, every one that thirsteth," is not restricted to those renovated souls that thirst after righteousness: it seems rather to bespeak the attention of such as are seeking after happiness where it can never be found. See Isa. lv. 1, 2. Nor do I think the Savior's invitation to those who *labor and are heavy laden* ought to be considered as merely addressed to sin-burdened souls. Does not our true David, Israel's king, in imitation of his type, invite every one that is in distress, and every one that is in debt, and every one that is discontented, to gather themselves to him, with the gracious promise, that he will give them rest? 1 Sam. xxii. 2. Matt. xi. 28—30. But if *these* invitations should be thought to be restricted to persons of a particular character, there are enough others which very manifestly admit of no such restriction. The *promises* are made to something amiable in our character, something which we never possess until we are born of God; but *commands* and *invitations* are addressed to all, both good and bad.

I now return to the question, What is meant by an acceptance of the gospel offer? It must undoubtedly mean, that the salvation of Christ is received on the very terms of the offer; and that on these terms it is *cordially* received. Should an earthly sovereign offer a free pardon to rebellious subjects, on condition of reconciliation to his government, their acceptance of his offer must imply submission to his authority. A real acceptance of the offer of salvation, which is made us through the mediation of the Son of God, always comprehends these two things, viz. a cordial approbation of the salvation itself, and of the way in which it was procured. The salvation itself is a deliverance from suffering, by means of a deliverance from sin. The man who accepts the offer of salvation, does as cordially approve of deliverance from sin, as from suffering. Sin, in his view, is a body of death, from which it is most desirable to be delivered: and if there is any thing for which he unfeignedly thanks God, it is for the prospect of a complete deliverance from this evil, through the Lord Jesus Christ. Rom. vii. 24, 25. The circumstance, that his deliverance comes through the death and intercession of Christ, in distinction from its being the fruit of his own personal merit, forms no objection to it. To him it is a pleasing circumstance; nay, it is that without which salvation would lose all its glory. To sum up all in a word; he who embraces the offer of salvation, comes fully into the views of the God of salvation. He delights in just such a salvation as God offers him; and is well pleased with the very Savior in whom God declares that He is well pleased. He highly prizes reconciliation with God; and reconciliation in such a



way, as to imply no relinquishment of claims on the part of divine government, nor the fixing of any stigma on the divine character. He rejoices with all his heart, that, by means of the atonement, God is declared to be just, while he is the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

If we thus accept the offer, the salvation is ours. As the terms of salvation originate with God, it necessarily supposes, that he has given *his* consent to them already. As soon, therefore, as we have satisfactory evidence that we have acceded to the terms ourselves, we may be assured that the treaty of peace between us and our Maker is actually ratified. If we are at peace with him, there can be no doubt of his being at peace with us. If we possess that faith by which proffered mercy is accepted, we are assured that *we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Rom. v. 1.

The call to sinners to embrace the gospel, I have considered in the light of an *invitation*; and in this form it is often presented to us in the oracles of God. But let it be remembered, that between this and such invitations as we often receive from our friends, there is a wide difference. When we negative an invitation to participate with our friends in a feast, we feel no guilt; for we consider them as rather informing us what we *may* do, than what we *must* do; as giving us permission to partake with them, rather than imposing an obligation. But an invitation from God has all the binding authority of a command. It is not only designed to inform us, that we may come to the marriage supper, which he has at great expense prepared, but that we must come, or be guilty of a heinous sin. To refuse to comply with the gospel offer, and take hold of the covenant of grace, is undoubtedly a much more aggravated sin than that which was committed in Eden, by which the first covenant was violated, and the whole race exposed to ruin. We are not merely invited, but also *commanded* to believe on the name of the Son of God: and he who does not obey this command, practically declares that he is resolved still to persist in his rebellion against the throne of Heaven. 1 John, iii. 23.

Is not the truth of the present Article put beyond all doubt? Is it not abundantly evident, that life is set before us in the gospel, and that we are invited to choose it? The proof of this does not depend on a single text: there are many which unite their testimony in support of the same thing. The doctrine which is contained in this Article, appears diffused through the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Every passage does not treat on this particular subject: but there are many which do; and these all unite in exhibiting the gospel offer as free and universal. They harmonize in the declaration, that all things are ready, and that all who will, may come to the marriage; and that all who truly accept the invitation will be made perfectly welcome.

It may, perhaps, be brought as an objection to this statement, that for a long time the blessings of salvation were confined to one nation, namely the Jews. To this I would reply; that the door of mercy, even then, stood open to the gentiles. The door of the church was not shut against them. Provision was made by the God of Israel for the stranger who should sojourn amongst his people, (if he were disposed to worship their God, and attend on his appointed ordinances,) that he

and his seed should be entitled to the seal of the covenant, the same as though they had been native Israelites. By comparing Deut. xxxii. 8, with Acts xvii. 26, 27, it would seem as though this is assigned as a special reason, why God, who made of one blood all the nations of men, located the children of Israel in the midst of the sons of Adam; that their gentile brethren might by this means have a better opportunity to seek Jehovah, the true God, if haply, during all the darkness of that period, they might feel after him and find him.

There is, however, a wide difference between not being explicitly invited, and being forbidden to come. All the gentile nations are not yet explicitly invited: but certainly there is no interdict which keeps any of them back; for the commission to invite extends to all. And if, during the Jewish dispensation, there was not such an explicit command to preach to the gentiles, still it was always true that those gentiles who came to trust themselves under the wings of the God of Israel, were cheerfully received into the congregation of his people. Ruth ii. 12. The personal ministry of Christ was chiefly confined to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; but he never rejected a gentile who applied to him, either for healing or for salvation. If any instance occurred of his rejecting an applicant on account of *gentilism*, it was the case of the Syrophenician woman. And even in this case, it is obvious, that his deferring to grant her petition was not because he had no mercy for sinners of the gentiles; but that it was designed both to prove and to increase her faith and importunity. He proclaimed it as a rule, whereby he would be invariably regulated in dispensing those rich and enduring mercies, which in the character of a Savior he had to bestow; that no humble applicant should be sent empty away: *Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.*

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

The agreement of this with the Article which immediately precedes it, is very manifest; for the offer of salvation to sinners originates in an atonement for their sins. Without atonement there is no salvation; of course no offers of salvation are made, except what are based upon it. And it is in view of a propitiation for the sins of the *whole world*, that the *whole world* are to be invited to partake of these blessings. If the atonement were of a limited value, being sufficient for only a part of the race, there would be no propriety, by an unlimited invitation, to offer its benefits to all. And had its value been infinite (as it is) without being made for the human race in general, in such a sense as to furnish a provision for their salvation, still there would be no propriety in an indiscriminate offer. Although the atonement for sin, by the death of our Redeemer, was infinite; yet, since it was in no sense made for the fallen angels, the offers of salvation are not extended to them. They are not, like ourselves, put into a new state of probation; but "are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness to the judgment of the great day." In common with all intelligent creatures, they are under obligation to love the Redeemer's character, and to approve of the way of life by his death: but they have no part nor lot in the benefits of his

death ; nor have they ever received an invitation to become members of his redeemed family. But surely this is not the condition of our race, or of any part of it. We are all invited to the gospel feast. For *us* it was provided ; and if *we* do not eat of it, the only reason will be, that we will not accept the invitation he has sent us.

This Article has no disagreement with the *fourth*, which relates to the fall and ruined state of man. Although a general atonement, to be accompanied with a free offer of salvation to all men, could not have been inferred from the general depravity of the race, yet their depravity can be inferred, with the greatest certainty, from a general atonement, accompanied with a command to preach the gospel to every creature. On this subject the apostle reasons thus : “ Because we thus judge, that if one *died for all*, then were *all dead*.” In his view, the death of Christ for all men, proved that all were spiritually dead, and under the curse of the broken law. The command, to *offer salvation to all men*, even to the ends of the earth, is also full proof that the reign of sin is thus extensive.

The present Article is not at variance with the *third*, which states this important fact, that *God has given a perfect moral law to regulate the conduct of his intelligent creatures*. This perfect law is not set aside by the gracious offers made to transgressors : *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God has accomplished, by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, to condemn sin*, by making an atonement for it, *in his flesh*. The law is so magnified and honored by the infinite atonement, that neither the strictness of its requirements, nor the severity of its threatenings, need embarrass the minister of reconciliation, in preaching the gospel of the grace of God to every nation, grade, and character.

If this Article is in harmony with the *three* which immediately go before it, there can be no dispute concerning its agreement with the other *two*. If the atonement has made such a full declaration of the righteousness of God, considered as the giver of the law and the supporter of government, that there will be no danger that the law will be relaxed by his promising to forgive the sinner who returns to him through Jesus Christ, there can be no doubt that this gracious promise is in harmony with his whole character.

Our heavenly Father has manifested his goodness in providing the atonement, and making all things ready for our salvation ; and also, in proclaiming it to us, and bidding us to come and partake of this enduring good. His goodness appears in the many kind invitations which he has caused to be inserted in his word ; also, by commissioning his ministers to present these invitations in his name, and urge them on our attention. He requires them to make such unwearied exertions to induce a compliance with their invitation, that he calls it by the name of compulsion : “ *Compel them to come in*.”

#### REMARKS.

1. The compassion of the Lord to our rebellious race is gloriously displayed, not only in the institution of the ministry of reconciliation, but also in actually raising up and qualifying men in the different ages



of the world, to engage in this important work. What a proof did he give of his good will to men, in raising up in the first age of the Christian church, such a minister of the word as Paul. Who can calculate the amount of good which has resulted and will yet result from his being put into the ministry? The merciful hand of God is to be acknowledged in the missionary movement of the present day. It is a glorious display of the good will of God towards the nations which are sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, that young men of talents, learning and piety, are freely consenting to forsake all, and to go to these destitute regions with the news of salvation: and that some of the daughters of our Zion, who are as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace, have also consented to join them in this holy enterprise. How will the glory of his benevolence be displayed, when he shall fill the world with the messengers of his grace; when he shall stir up his people fully to obey his neglected commands, by sending forth a host of devoted men, who shall go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

2. If the gospel offer may be made to every man, then may it be made to every one of my readers, and particularly to the individual who is now perusing these pages. My office makes it my duty, and I esteem it my privilege, to invite guests to the marriage. You perceive, my commission gives me full liberty to invite every man, woman, youth and child, whom I find. And now, since it has been so ordered in providence that I have found you, my dear reader, I would take the opportunity sincerely and affectionately to present you the gospel invitation, in the name of my Master; and I entreat you not to make light of it. An invitation to be an eternal guest at the marriage supper of the Lamb, is too great a boon to be trifled with. If you accept, your soul shall live; if you continue to refuse, you will never taste of the supper.

But perhaps the individual whom I now address is one who has accepted the invitation, and put on the wedding garment. If so, it is a matter of rejoicing; since he has chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from him. Such a one will allow me to solicit his fervent prayers in behalf of that class of my readers who have hitherto received the grace of God in vain. O that *they* knew in this their day the things of their peace!

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## ARTICLE VII.

ALL MANKIND, WITHOUT A SINGLE EXCEPTION, WHILE IN THEIR NATURAL OR UNRENEWED STATE, REJECT THE FREE OFFER OF SALVATION WHICH IS MADE THEM IN THE GOSPEL.

IN the preceding Article we saw salvation freely offered to every man: and here we shall see every unrenewed man obstinately rejecting the offer. As it is important we should be convinced of the free-

ness of the offer, so it behooves us to be apprised of the unwelcome reception which it every where meets. When we take a view of the exposed and perilous condition into which man has fallen, and the divine benevolence manifested in providing him relief; also the fullness of the provision, together with the unspeakably blessed consequences of an acceptance of the proffered mercy, and the remediless ruin connected with its refusal, we should be apt to conclude, that the gospel offer need only to be made, and it would immediately be accepted by all. But both scripture and fact prove that it is not so. These faithful witnesses agree in their testimony, that this infinitely gracious offer is rejected—rejected universally, and with unyielding obstinacy, so long as men are left to the inclination of their own natural hearts. The scripture furnishes such abundance of proof in support of the doctrine of this Article, that my plan will permit me to produce but a small portion of it.

1. The scriptures represent us as naturally averse to a *reconciliation to God*. They speak of God as *beseeking* us to be reconciled; which imports our great aversion to reconciliation. He says to a world of fallen creatures, “Return unto me, and I will return unto you;” but they do not return. “The fool (who, in scripture language, means the unsanctified man,) hath said in his heart, *No God*.” This is the language of every unsanctified *heart*, whatever may be the convictions of the understanding. When the Son of God came in his Father’s name, to reduce this revolted world to subjection, in a way as merciful to us as it was honorable to his Father’s authority, a mighty combination was formed between men of all ranks, (so that a fair exhibition of the character of fallen man was made,) and the object of this combination was to free themselves from the restraints of divine government. *Let us*, say they, *break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us*; i. e. “Let us maintain our independence of God. We will not have King Messiah reign over us; we will not be reconciled to God; neither to the Father, nor to the Son.” If I have not altogether misapprehended the representation which the Holy Ghost has made concerning this combination, it is a solemn truth, however humiliating, that such is the disaffection of our revolted world, that we would sooner dethrone the Almighty, than submit to the proffered terms of reconciliation. 2 Cor. v. 20. Mal. iii. 7. Ps. xiv. 1, and ii. 3. Luke xix. 14.

2. Unrenewed men are totally averse to the exercise of *unfeigned repentance for their sins*; but without such repentance the gospel offer can not be received. That, which is spoken of the Jezebel of the New Testament, is true in relation to all the unregenerate; “I gave her space to repent—and she repented not.” Rev. ii. 21. The space given us for repentance, we are inclined to fill up with sinful gratifications. “Not knowing,” says the apostle, “that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance; but after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath.” It would seem as if the goodness of God was enough to allure his enemies to repent of the sins they have committed against him; but the hardness and impeniteny of their heart resists its influence. Our natural aversion to repentance is spoken of as the thing that renders us insensible to the obligation. When God says, “Return unto me,” we say, “Wherein

shall we return?" "Ye say, We see, therefore your sin remaineth." Natural men not unfrequently exercise a repentance which is of the same selfish nature as the sin that is deplored; but they have not the least degree of that godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of. 2 Cor. vii. 10.

3. Unrenewed men are wholly inclined to *establish their own righteousness*, and therefore can have no willingness to accept the gospel offer; since a renunciation of their own righteousness is a condition without which the offer can never be accepted. The salvation offered in the gospel is all of grace. The justification which it proposes, is through another's righteousness, and not our own. But no *unrenewed* man is willing to cast away his own garment, and come to Christ. "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." John v. 40. This is the testimony of Him who knew what was in man. Nor did his testimony relate merely to a few individuals, of an uncommonly perverse character. Had the whole Jewish nation been before him, he would have said the same. The apostle applies the character of self-righteousness to the whole nation: "But *Israel*, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." Again he says, "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." Rom. ix. 31, 32, and x. 3. Here we are presented with a whole nation, who preferred a righteousness of their own to that which God had provided to satisfy the claims of his holy law. And the preference they gave it was very decided; since they *went about* to establish their own, while they refused the righteousness of God, which required only to be *submitted to*. In this self-righteous spirit, let us remember, they illustrated not the Jewish character alone, but the character of all nations. While remaining in unregeneracy, we are all too proud to submit to the righteousness which God has provided for us—a righteousness which shows our character to be so vile as justly to expose us to shame and everlasting contempt; and so vile as to shut out all hope of our ever restoring ourselves to his favor, by virtue of our own deservings.

4. That the unregenerate are altogether indisposed to accept the offer of salvation, is proved by *their total aversion to humble prayer*. That man who is not willing to come before the throne of grace in prayer, is unwilling to be saved by grace. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near." But it is declared to be characteristic of the wicked man, that "through the pride of his countenance he will not seek after God." The wicked are charged with saying unto God, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?" Ps. x. 4. Job xxi. 14, 15.

Should it be objected, that some of the unregenerate pray, and even importunately ask to be favored with an interest in Christ; I would answer, the scripture foresaw it would be so, even when it condemned



them all as prayerless characters ; therefore it exposed the defective nature of the prayers which they would offer. It is written, "Ye ask, and ye receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." Again it is written, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law," (and this is done by every one who has that carnal unrenewed mind which is not subject to the law,) "even his prayer shall be abomination." Jam. iv. 3. Prov. xxviii. 9.

5. The scripture represents a fallen world as *decidedly preferring the service of idols to the service of Jehovah* : and this furnishes evidence that they must possess an utter aversion to the terms of reconciliation ; for these oblige them utterly to renounce their idols. "Hath a nation," says the God of Israel, "changed their gods, which yet are no gods ? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit." He represents this backsliding people as saying, "I have loved strangers," (i. e. strange gods) "and after them will I go." Jer. ii. 11, 25. Idolatry does not owe its origin to an ignorance of the true God, but rather to a dreadful aversion to his holy service. The time was, when Jehovah, the true God, was known to all the children of Adam ; but they did not like to retain him in their knowledge : and this gave rise to idolatry. The heathen preferred their senseless idols to the living and true God ; and even the Israelites themselves (i. e. such of them as were uncircumsised in heart,) manifested a constant propensity to forsake their own God for the idols of the nations. Some may think that human nature is greatly changed from what it was in ancient times, especially in its propensity to idolatry. But what reason have we to think so ? Is it not still true, that the greater part of the human race are the avowed worshipers of idols ? Is it not also true, that those countries where Jehovah is professedly worshiped are full of a species of idols, which their inhabitants are as unwilling to renounce, as pagans are to give up the worship of their images ? *Riches, Honor, and Pleasure* are the principal idols of christendom. And how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God ? How can they believe which receive honor one of another ! Nor is it any less difficult for them to become believers in the holy Jesus, who are lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. Mark x. 23. John v. 44. 2 Tim. iii. 4.

6. We cannot accept the proffered salvation, *unless we break off from our sins* ; and this "the servants of sin," "the children of disobedience," are entirely unwilling to do. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isa. lv. 7. The relinquishment of sin, both in external practice and in the thoughts or affections of the heart, is here made a needful requisite to our obtaining pardoning mercy. But it is a requisite with which none of the unregenerate world are willing to comply. Their heart is fully set to do evil. Simple ones love simplicity, scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge. Therefore it comes to pass, that when God calls they refuse ; when he stretches out his hand no man regards it. When in great mercy he points them to the good way, requiring them to walk therein, with an assurance, that in so doing they shall find rest unto their souls, they

reply, We will not walk therein. Prov. i. 22, 24. Jer. vi. 16.

7. Natural men are represented as *closing every avenue to the soul, for the express purpose of shutting out the truth*, and preventing it from exerting an influence to bring them back to God and his service. "Their eyes have they closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." Matt. xiii. 15. In this passage, which contains the words of Him who came to save sinners, they are represented as closing their eyes, ears, and hearts, against the reception of divine truth; and as making this dreadful resistance for the purpose of preventing their own conversion. And this representation agrees with that which the prophets had made before his advent: "But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law." Instead of having their shoulders ready to take on them the yoke of the Supreme King, and their ears and hearts open to hear and submit to his law, they pulled away their shoulders, stopped their ears, and made their hearts hard as an adamant stone. See Zech. vii. 11, 12. Surely sinners of the character described by the prophets, and by Christ, cannot be considered as standing ready to receive those invitations of divine mercy which are sent to them.

But it may perhaps be said, that there are natural men of quite a different spirit, who seem ready to forsake their sins and reform their lives, though as yet they pretend to no regenerating change. It has not been my intention to intimate that natural men, as such, are incapable of being in any respect reformed. The Savior speaks of some of this class of men, whom the unclean spirit leaves for a time, so that their house becomes, in a sense, swept and garnished; and yet, remaining empty, it is ready to receive back its old occupant. Matt. xii. 43—45. The apostle Peter compares such men to a sow that is washed; but which, not being changed into another creature, still retains her propensity to wallow in the mire. Such external reformatations may be illustrated by the conduct of mariners, who in a storm throw those goods into the sea which they wish back again as soon as the storm is over. In times of distress, sinners often seem to turn to the Lord; but their hearts are still wedded to their lusts. Their heart is deceitful; and this deceit they hold fast, and refuse to return. Jer. viii. 5.

That natural men are obstinately opposed to the offers of the gospel, is evinced by their resistance of the best means which are used to induce them to accept these offers.

1st. They are disposed to resist the influence of *the inspired word*. We are favored with a book, well authenticated as a revelation from God, containing the whole controversy between Him and us, with a proposed plan of reconciliation. In this book, His character and ours, His claims and our obligations, are explicitly stated. Hostility to this book, it must be acknowledged by all who give credit to its inspiration, is decisive proof of aversion to an adjustment of the controversy between God and ourselves. If men are unwilling to be guided by this lamp of heaven, they do not wish to walk in the path of life. And

what is the fact in relation to this matter? Are sinners willing to be guided by the word of God? Far from it. "Behold the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach: they have no delight in it." Again; "I have written unto him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing." Jer. vi. 10. Hos. viii. 12.

There are many, among those to whom God addresses himself by the written word, who wholly refuse to receive this communication of his will. In the view of every Christian, this refusal must constitute full proof of their disposition to adhere to the standard of rebellion. Nor is it an evidence less decisive of such a disposition, which *they* give who so wrest the scriptures as entirely to alter the terms of reconciliation. There are many unconverted men that are neither infidels nor heretics, who nevertheless with one consent resist the influence which the sacred volume exerts to bring them under the yoke of Christ. It is made exceedingly manifest, notwithstanding the Bible is a perfect book, and altogether adapted to our necessities, that it will never of itself effect the reconciliation of a single rebel, on the self-denying terms which it declares to be essential to salvation.

2dly. *The providences of God, both merciful and afflictive*, when added to the calls of his word, prove insufficient to induce the wicked to forsake their evil way, and come over to the standard of reconciliation. "Let *favor* be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness.—Lord, when *thy hand is lifted up* they will not see." "But this people hath a revolting and rebellious heart: they are revolted and gone. Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God that giveth rain, both the former and the latter rain in his season." In this passage we are shown, that a revolting and rebellious heart is proof against that goodness of God which is manifested in giving us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons. The correcting rod is rendered ineffectual, by the same revolting rebellious heart: "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return." Isa. xxvi. 10, 11. Jer. v. 3, 23, 24. It is made very evident by the declarations of scripture, supported by stubborn facts, that our mercies can not be so numerous as to draw us; nor our afflictions so severe as to drive us to an unfeigned reconciliation to God.

3dly. They who are under the power of moral death will reject the overtures of mercy, when presented and pressed upon them by *the ministry of reconciliation*. The ministry is a divine appointment, and as means it is remarkably adapted to produce the desired effect. They who are designed to be entrusted with this work, are those whom God, after reconciling them unto himself, and richly enlightening them in the knowledge of his will, has constituted his ambassadors, to negotiate a treaty of peace with such of their fellow men as still continue in a state of revolt. They are to instruct them into all divine truth, and affectionately pray them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. And what is the reception with which they meet? When Christ was giving to his first ministers their commission, he said, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." Those, whom in the name of their Master they invite to the gospel feast, beg to be excused from



accepting the invitation. Sinful men, even such as have not been recovered by grace, are compared to the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear ; which will not hear the voice of the charmers, charming never so wisely. Ps. lviii. 4, 5. The gospel is a glorious system of divine benevolence, it is good news to our apostate world, being entirely adapted to our guilty and miserable condition ; and yet it can not be preached so frequently, or skilfully, as to overcome the prejudices and rebellious feelings of Adam's apostate children. As to any sufficiency to effect this desirable object, the sinner's acceptance of gospel salvation, he that planteth and he that watereth are nothing. 1 Cor. iii. 7. We often see the gospel preached, both publicly and from house to house, without any success. The ambassador of Christ beseeches all his hearers, collectively and individually, to become reconciled to God ; and yet not one of them becomes reconciled. He repeats his message through every sabbath of the year, and accompanies it with much instruction and strong motives ; but it often happens that the year closes without a single addition made to the church, and without a hope that any one has been turned from the power of Satan unto God.

4thly. One of the most striking proofs of the truth of the doctrine contained in this Article, is derived from *that reception which CHRIST met with when he preached his own gospel*. He came for the express purpose of dying for sinners, and calling them to repentance. No one can doubt, that every thing which he did in relation to the salvation of men, was done perfectly. He taught the way of truth perfectly, both as to matter and manner. His heart was full of benevolence. This beamed in his countenance, and sanctified his whole deportment. I hope there is no servant who will imagine, that, in preaching the gospel and presenting the claims of God, he has acquired a skill unknown to his Master. To the end of the world it must remain true, *Never man spake like this man*. In a supreme sense, Christ is "the Light of the world." But this Light shone in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. "Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." "He came to his own, and his own received him not." "No man received his testimony." John i. 5, 11, and iii. 19, 32. The evangelical prophet represents him as uttering this complaint, "I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain." Isa. xlix. 4. Here is a practical demonstration, that the gospel offer can not be so advantageously presented as to secure its acceptance.

5thly. Sinners, so long as they remain in unregeneracy, resist the gospel call when *presented by the divine Spirit*. "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." Acts vii. 51. God says, "My Spirit shall not always *strive* with man ;" which expression implies the strong resistance which we are inclined to make to the Spirit's influence. Could we make dependence on any class of sinners, that they would accede to the conditions of salvation, we should select those who are under the awakening influences of the Holy Spirit. In this class, I think, we may reckon that Roman governor who trembled when he heard Paul reason of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. He now enjoyed the best of preaching, and it appears to have been set home on his conscience, by the awakening influences of the Spirit ;

and still he was not ready to be reconciled to God. The true feelings of every carnal mind were expressed, when he said, "Go thy way for this time." Acts xxiv. 25. Every awakened sinner does not, like Felix, interrupt the preacher whose doctrine gives him pain; nor even wish him to desist from delivering his message: but there is no sinner so pressed with conviction of sin, and danger of eternal damnation, as not still to wish to delay an unfeigned submission to God. There is no man, whether Jew or gentile, while remaining in unregeneracy, who does not, with his whole heart, reject the overtures of mercy made to him through the mediation of Jesus Christ. However much his understanding may be enlightened, or his conscience awakened, it is still the language of his *heart*, "I will not have this man reign over me." While the Spirit proceeds no further than to excite attention, and present motives, leaving the carnal mind to its own choice, there is nothing in it better than enmity against God and insubjection to his holy law. Rom. viii. 7.

In an awakened state of mind, the sinner is willing, rather than be forever miserable, to hear the gospel, and, like Herod who heard John, he will do many things. But, to the very last, there is one thing that he is unwilling to do; he is totally unwilling to accede to the terms of salvation which are proffered him. The terms, though very gracious, are at the same time very holy. God stands ready for Christ's sake to forgive all that is past; but he will not forgive, unless the sinner repents; and his repentance must rise above selfishness. He must deny himself, else he cannot become an acceptable disciple of the holy Jesus. To such terms he is opposed—as obstinately opposed, as before he was awakened to see his danger. He can now be persuaded to relinquish his external transgressions; but a supreme love to self, that fountain whence every corrupt stream has issued, he is entirely unwilling to dry up.

At this crisis, because Christ, by his word and Spirit, stands at the door of his heart, he imagines that he himself is the one who is knocking, and that Christ's door is the place where it is done. He thinks that he stands waiting for the Savior to open to him. Now if this were indeed true, the door of mercy would be at once thrown open to him: for He who cannot lie has said, *To him that knocketh it shall be opened*. The first rap at mercy's door is heard, and is sure to gain admittance. But it is not so with Christ's knockings at the door of our heart. He stands long and knocks loud; and, instead of opening the door to give admittance, we bolt it against him. And this we do even after we are made to tremble in view of the fearful consequences of our obstinacy. Conviction of danger does not generate holiness. Nor does a conviction of our obligation to love God induce that love. We see, and still we hate. John xv. 24. Holiness is the very thing which the sinner hates; therefore that Being which has the most of it is the most hated. Had the gospel been any thing else, besides a system of holiness, the carnal mind might have submitted to it: but as it now is, the same carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and is not subject to his holy law, cannot submit to the gospel—that is, cannot be pleased with a scheme of grace which is in perfect accordance with that law.

The writer has not the least disposition to misrepresent or exaggerate the depravity of human nature ; but as he has been fully convinced of this obstinacy in sin, in relation to his own heart, and as he thinks the scriptures clearly show this to be the character of the whole unregenerate world, he considers it a matter of high importance to be understood by every child of Adam. It is made essential to intercourse with our Maker, that we should know every man the plague of his own heart. 1 Kin. viii. 38. Till we are apprised of our moral helplessness, we cannot know how dependent we are on the grace of God for relief. All grant our nature is depraved ; but many seem to think this depravity is not total. Among those who acknowledge its entireness, there are some who do not believe it to be so obstinate and unyielding as it has now been represented to be ; at least, they do not believe that this unyielding obstinacy extends to every unrenewed mind. In view of this difference of opinion, on a subject of such primary importance in the scheme of grace, the writer wishes still to detain the reader, while he turns his attention more directly to these two points, viz. the *universality* and the *pertinacious obstinacy* of our refusal of the gospel offer.

First. Its *universality*. All refuse. He who provided the gospel feast, gives us this account of the reception his invitation meets ;—“*They all with one consent* began to make excuse.” Luke xiv. 18. The guests are not all invited at one time ; nor do they make precisely the same excuse ; but they all have *some* excuse to make ; and appear as much united in it as if they had previously held a general council, and come to this result, that they would all, to a man, refuse any invitation which might be presented to them by the servants of Christ. Under the appellation of Wisdom, Christ declares, “*I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded,*”—no man, not an individual, accepted my invitation. John, the forerunner of Christ, says concerning him, “*No man* receiveth his testimony.” Paul asserts, “*There is none* that seeketh after God.”

But do not these expressions, it may be said, import that it is the *prevailing*, rather than the *universal* disposition of men, to reject the gospel offer ? What reason, I would ask, can exist for understanding these comprehensive expressions in a restricted sense ? Do not the scriptures show that we have all descended from the same parents, and that in common we inherit their depraved nature ? Do not the scriptures teach that, in the grand features of character, men are alike, even as face answereth to face in water—alike, so that it is proper to speak of them all as having but *one heart* ? Prov. xxvii. 19. Eccl. viii. 2. Who of this fallen race has a right to say, that he inherits a purer nature than his fellows ? “*Are we better than they ?*” that is, are we Jews better than the gentiles ? “*No, in no wise ; for we have before proved both Jews and gentiles, (viz. the whole race of Adam,) that all are under sin.*” Rom. iii. 9. To the Jews Christ crucified is a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness ; that is, to such of both nations as have not been called. 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

Men are agreed in rejecting Christ, who are agreed in nothing else. In this, Herod and Pilate became friends. Luke xxiii. 12. All the heterogeneous materials, of which human society is composed, seem



now to possess one common nature. When the Lord Almighty calls revolters to return to him, the poor and the rich, the ignorant and the learned, have but one mind. The prophet Jeremiah, one of the Lord's messengers, tells us, that he first addressed his message to the *poor*, and that they made their faces harder than a rock, and refused to return. Upon this, he resolved to get him to the *great men*, that had been better instructed; but these, he tells us, had altogether broken the yoke and burst the bonds. Jer. v. 3—5.

Secondly. The gospel offer is rejected with *pertinacious obstinacy*. It is not only true that all unrenewed men reject it, but they reject it at all times, and under all circumstances. They reject it in the gaiety of their youth, and when the mind is sobered with age; and even when they perceive that their probation is just ready to terminate in the unalterable fixedness of the eternal state.

But does the gospel invitation never find the natural man in so pliable a frame that he will yield to its pressing motives? No, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God;—neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." His heart is *desperately* wicked—wicked to desperation, as to any hope of reforming itself. It is *fully set* to do evil. This is the character of the heart, (that is the *natural* heart) of the sons of men. "The bond of iniquity," in which all the unregenerate are bound, never breaks itself. They are "the servants of sin, and are free from righteousness." In them "sin hath reigned unto death:" and sin is a monarch that never consents to an abdication of the throne it has usurped. The carnal mind being enmity, determined enmity against God, is not subject to his law, neither indeed *can* be. Hence it is, that no desirable change can be expected as the result of the will of the flesh. Was it not in view of the enmity of the carnal mind, and the obstinacy of the unrenewed will, that Joshua said to the Israelites, "Ye *cannot* serve the Lord; for he is a holy God?" And was not the same thing in the view of the Son of God, when he said, "No man *can* come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him?" 1 Cor. ii. 14. Jer. xvii. 9. Eccl. viii. 11. Acts viii. 23. Rom. v. 21. and viii. 7. John i. 13, and vi. 44. Josh. xxiv. 19. These and such like passages speak of no inability, as pertaining to the natural man, which is not of a *moral* nature, consisting of an unreasonable disinclination of heart; but they evidently suppose this disinclination to be his uniform character, a character which he retains so long as he continues to be a natural or unrenewed man.

Need any other proof be adduced to establish a point, which has already been confirmed by more than two or three witnesses? For if these have not been suborned, (and I trust they have not,) no contrary testimony can be derived from the sacred writings. They will not furnish a single text to invalidate what they have said concerning the universality and pertinacious obstinacy of the sinner's rejection of the gospel offer.

It may perhaps be stated, as an objection to the doctrine which has been advanced, that the scriptures speak of some men as embracing the offers of mercy, while others reject them; that when the gospel is preached, some believe the things which are spoken, and some believe

not : and that some even receive the word with all *readiness of mind*. Acts xvii. 11, and xxviii. 24. I conclude I have not been understood to assert, that no man ever embraced the salvation which, through Jesus Christ, is freely offered to our sinful race. That this salvation has been embraced, and *cordially embraced*, is fully attested by the word of God. But they who have given it the most cordial reception were once included in the class of unbelievers. When they were first invited to go and work in the Lord's vineyard, they said, We go not : but afterwards they repented and went. Matt. xxi. 29. No man ever embraced the offer of salvation with greater cordiality than Paul ; and yet no man ever rejected this offer more decidedly than he once did. To account for the fact, that some men do eventually accept that gracious invitation they once refused, and which others still refuse, does not fall within the province of this Article, but will naturally come into view under the next. It is the province of the present Article, to show how this invitation will be treated by all men, while remaining in unregeneracy.

The present Article has represented the children of men as failing of the grace of God (if they fail at all) through a *voluntary rejection* of the gospel offer : now to some it is a formidable objection against this representation, that there are passages which seem to speak of them as *unable*, rather than unwilling to accept of it. This, it is acknowledged, would be a formidable objection indeed, if the sinner's inability to accept the offer were not, as we have shown, of a *moral* nature, arising from the strength of his disaffection to a holy God and his holy government. Who has ever thought there was any contradiction between these two declarations concerning our Creator ? " With God all things are possible "—" It is impossible for God to lie." His inability to lie, being of a moral kind, has no repugnance to his natural ability to do all things. Now let these two passages relating to God be understood, and we shall be prepared to reconcile those apparently contradictory reasons assigned, why sinners do not come to Christ for salvation. We shall be prepared to see a harmony between these two declarations of Christ : " Ye *will not* come to me that ye might have life." " No man *can* come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." John v. 40, and vi. 44. The latter is not intended to change the nature of the difficulty that is presented in the former, but is designed to show that this voluntary difficulty, which consists in an unwillingness to come to Christ for life, is both universal and pertinacious, so as never in any instance to be removed, except by a divine interposition.\*

\* All who regard the authority of the holy scriptures, must acknowledge that the sinner can labor under no such inability to accept the gospel offer, as to furnish him an excuse. Yet there are some who say, that in every sense he is unable to do it. They think it has a mischievous effect, to tell the sinner he has *natural ability* to comply with the terms of salvation. They say, its tendency is to keep him ignorant of the entire depravity of his heart, and to make him rely on his own strength, rather than on the grace of God. That a misunderstanding of the subject of natural ability has had such an effect, is undoubtedly true. But this does not prove, that a right understanding of the matter is either mischievous or useless.

It will be said, that the scriptures make no such distinction, as that which is now made between *natural* and *moral* ability and inability ; that they do not represent men as having natural ability to be Christians, at the same time they have no moral ability. To this I reply : If the scriptures have not by logical terms marked the difference

Against the representation that has been made concerning the voluntariness of the sinner's rejection of the gospel offer, it may be objected; that the scriptures often speak of the children of disobedience, as though they were forcibly held in bondage by the prince of darkness. The scriptures, it is true, speak of the devil and his angels as making every possible effort to prevent the salvation of lost men. They tell us that "the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour;" and that he resembles a strong man armed, who keeps his house with vigilance, lest his goods should be wrested from him. 1 Pet. v. 8. Luke xi. 21. But the scriptures do not lead us to conclude, that Satan retains his subjects contrary to their own will. He has his devices, wiles and subtleties, by which he deceives their wicked and deceitful hearts, and induces them to consent to remain in his service. Christ, when addressing such as were wholly

between the two kinds of inability, which we denominate *natural* and *moral*, the difference is manifestly recognized. Take this passage for an example: "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not." 2 Cor. viii. 12. Here it is implied, that a willing mind to do duty, is always required; and that whatever can not be effected by this, is not obligatory. If the apostacy has diminished the strength of our natural powers, it may furnish a reason why God should not claim from us that amount of service, which would otherwise have been obligatory; but that impotence to the performance of duty, which consists in a depraved will, does nothing to lessen our obligations. The apostacy has rendered us blind, and yet not taken away our eyes; it has made us deaf, and yet we have ears. Therefore we hear it said, "Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears." And because they have eyes and ears, God commands, "Hear, ye deaf, and look, ye blind, that ye may see." Isa. xliii. 8: xlii. 18. It is here implied, that if God's people had been blind through want of eyes, or deaf through want of ears, they would have had an excuse for their blindness and deafness: in other words; If their spiritual blindness and deafness had been owing to some natural defect, over which their will had no control, it would be innocent; but now they had no cloak for their sin. The scriptures represent depravity, whether partial or total, whether it begin with ourselves or descend from our ancestors, as constituting an impediment in the way of complying with the divine requirements, which is altogether of a different nature from those impediments that are the result of corporeal or intellectual weakness. And all who seek to produce in the minds of depraved men a conviction of sin, are obliged to make this distinction. They may use a different phraseology, to express what Edwards intended by natural and moral inability; but a distinction between the two they must make; they can not help it. All will find it impossible to produce conviction in the mind of the sinner, for his refusal to comply with the conditions of the gospel, in case he actually believes that his inability to yield compliance is of the same nature as the inability of a blind man to see, a sick man to labor, or an idiot to reason.

Some concede to the sinner, that his inability is in *every respect* like that of the blind and deaf man, and yet imagine they can disarm him of his excuses, by charging on him the fault of *losing* his ability. They argue; if a servant has thrown away an instrument, with which his master had furnished him, to enable him to perform a certain piece of work, and without which it can not be performed, it is right for the master still to require the performance, though the servant is now in every respect unable to do it. This way of relieving the difficulty does not appear to be at all satisfactory. In the case stated, it is evident, the servant's crime must consist in throwing away his instrument; not in being unable to do the posposed work without it. But should any think it to be reasonable to require the servant to work without a tool, seeing it was by his own folly that he lost it, they would hardly think it reasonable to require his children, who were born long after it was lost, to perform that labor for which this lost tool was indispensably requisite. Let us now just change the nature of the servant's inability, and it relieves at once the whole difficulty, as it respects himself and his children. Instead of his losing the necessary instrument for the performance of his labor, let us suppose the thing he lost (by whatever means it matters not) was the spirit of obedience, and that the whole difficulty consisted in a rebellious spirit which he had gotten in its room; in this case it would be as perfectly reasonable that he should be required to perform the task assigned him, as if no difficulty existed. And if his children have the same rebellious spirit with their father, although they may have derived it from him, it is no excuse for their refusing to do the work, required of them by one, who is acknowledged to be their rightful master.



under his diabolical influence, said, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father *ye will do*." John viii. 44. As soon as we become unwilling to do his lusts, his power over us ceases. Fallen angels, potent as they are, can not with their combined power prevent the salvation of the feeblest worm of the dust, who is sincerely desirous to exchange their bondage for the liberty of Christ.

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

Between this and the preceding Articles there can be no want of harmony. There can be none between this and the one which immediately precedes it. That shows the gospel salvation to be freely offered to all ; and this, that the offer is rejected by all. There is no contradiction in saying, that an offer is freely made, and that it is voluntarily rejected. I can perceive no contradiction between these two parts of the parable of the marriage supper : "Come unto the marriage" — "But they made light of it." Matt. xxii. 4, 5. The one is expressive of the infinite condescension of God, in giving us a free invitation to partake of the provisions of his grace ; and the other, of our sin and folly in refusing such a gracious invitation. That bountiful Being who, at his own expense, has made the provision, says, "Come : " the wretched sinner to whom the invitation is sent, returns for answer, "I pray thee have me excused." If the gospel invitation can be refused by one sinner, it is certainly possible it should be refused by every other sinner, wherever it is sent.

I can perceive no disagreement between this and the *fifth* Article : for an atoning sacrifice can be made for all men, and yet all men be disposed to reject it. The atonement is something wrought *for* us, not *in* us. Of itself it produces no alteration in our depraved character. The atonement has spread a table and provided a supper, of which even they for whom it was provided may never taste. Luke xiv. 24. I grant, the wisdom of God would not have been displayed in making this costly provision in vain ; (and as we advance in our system we shall find it has not been made in vain ; ) but I see no repugnance between the doctrine of atonement, even of a general atonement, and the sentiment which has been advocated under the present Article, viz. That mankind are universally and obstinately inclined to reject the salvation which it proffers. Indeed, an atonement for *all* is the only thing which can, in a proper sense, give opportunity for all to reject it. We can not with propriety be said to refuse a gift which is never proffered us.

There is a very manifest harmony between this Article and the *fourth*. Under that we were led to contemplate man's apostacy from God, and its corrupting influence on the whole race. The human race can be illustrated by a tree, of which Adam is the root, and every one of his descendants a branch. According to a divine constitution, if the root became corrupt, the corruption was to be communicated to every branch of this wide-spreading tree. Therefore, as soon as it is ascertained to be the character of one of the children of Adam, to reject offered mercy, we know this must be the native character of every one

of them. While considering the subject of depravity, we saw that all men were described as having but *one heart*. But if there were so much difference between natural men, that some were disposed to accept, while others rejected the Savior, the scriptures would never have attributed one common character to them all.

It was also seen, that enmity, complete and determined enmity, against God, is the character of the carnal mind—the mind of every unconverted man in the world. In perfect harmony with that representation, we are here taught that every such man is totally unwilling to embrace the Savior. Since it is the true character of God which the unsanctified hate, the clearest exhibition of that character will naturally excite their greatest opposition. No one has made so clear an exhibition of the divine glory as the only begotten Son, who was eternally in the bosom of the Father. It might therefore be expected, that those creatures who had revolted from God would reject his Son, the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person. And so it fell out: “But now,” said the Son, “have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.” It is perfectly natural, that the same heart, which is not subject to the law, should reject the gospel; for the gospel is designed to magnify the law and make it honorable.

A *selfish heart*, whatever may be the conviction of the judgment, will secretly hate, if it does not openly oppose, all which tends to pull down the fabric of selfishness. Such a heart secretly hates the law of God, because it acknowledges no selfish affections, with whatever external covering they may be adorned, to be of the nature of obedience. Nor is there a selfish heart in the world which is pleased with the gospel. In some respects there is quite a difference among natural men, and in nothing does it appear greater, than in their different attention to the subject of religion. Without a change of nature, they can be made to do every thing in relation to this subject that can be done consistently with the retention of the selfish principle. But when the selfish principle is required to be renounced, there are not motives enough in the universe to gain their consent. Through an entire unwillingness to have this idol dethroned, such a change can never be effected, unless by the interposition of an agency more efficient than mere motives.

If this *seventh* Article harmonizes, as we have seen, with the three which immediately precede it, I think it cannot be at variance with either of the other three that have been considered. That part of the system which we have already passed over, taken in a reversed order, may be compressed into the following sentence: [which I have separated by dashes, for the purpose of giving distinctness, as far as possible, to the several Articles:] By nature we are all inclined obstinately and perseveringly to reject the gracious proposals of reconciliation—freely proffered us on the most favorable conditions possible—through an infinite atonement—made for the sin of an apostate world—which sin consists in opposing divine government, and transgressing a law altogether calculated to promote the well-being of the moral system—its welfare being essential to render the works of creation and providence a true display of uncreated glory—and thus to give the most decided proof, not only of the existence, but also of the infinite natural and moral perfection of JEHOVAH, the eternal and all-

sufficient God. Now is there a clause in this epitome, or an Article among the seven that have been already gone over, which is not confirmed by the word of truth ?

If we had now completed the whole doctrinal system, we should be left in a hopeless state, notwithstanding so much has been done to prepare the way for us to be saved. If I had no other doctrine to bring into view, these, which have been already considered, unfold enough of the grace of our offended Sovereign, to render us exceedingly guilty, not only as transgressors of a holy law, but more especially as despisers of blood-bought redemption. But criminal and inexcusable as it is, there is no reason to hope, while we are left to ourselves, that we shall do any thing better than persist in this rejection.

#### REMARKS.

1. As to proof of the greatness and inexcusableness of man's depravity, we have now arrived at the top of the climax. An infinitely gracious provision has been made, through which we can receive a free pardon, on our being reconciled to God. No conditions are required to be performed on our part that transcend our natural powers. Nothing is required of us like making satisfaction to divine justice, or repairing the injury done by our rebellion. All this has been effected by the death of Christ. This great and glorious salvation is now gratuitously proffered us, and is even urged upon us for our acceptance. If with all these gracious advantages for reconciliation we still remain unreconciled, how evident is it that we are opposed to God, and that our opposition is voluntary. Now we have as it were seen the Father and the Son, and hated them both. Let us never doubt any more of our depravity ; of its entireness, its obstinacy, or its inexcusableness. When we hear Him, who came to die for our sins, saying to us, *Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life*, let this stand in the room of all other arguments to establish the point, that we are sinners—down-right rebels against the government of the Most High.

2. If the professors and teachers of our holy religion can but be agreed in the doctrine which is the basis of this Article, they will probably have no disagreement in those doctrines that are disclosed in the subsequent Articles. But if we are not agreed in this, we shall probably differ in most of those which follow. There is a wide difference between the sentiments of him who holds, that all men are naturally disposed to reject the gospel offer, and of him who holds, that some men are naturally disposed to accept it. If we should agree in the sentiment, that aversion to the terms of salvation is *natural* to all men : and yet some of us were to believe, that many cases could be found, where nothing more was needed than an affecting presentation of the gracious terms, to remove the aversion, there would still be a wide difference in our sentiments concerning the extent of human depravity. If mere moral suasion, presented ever so forcibly, were sufficient to bring some sinners, in distinction from others, to accept the gospel offer, then between mere natural men the difference of character would be fundamental ; and the methods to be used in effecting their



salvation must be widely different. One scheme of grace would not be of universal application.

3. We see what would be the result of that scheme, which, in its zeal for the freedom of our moral actions, asserts that the will has a *self-determining power* that admits of no external influence to control it. Were such a scheme possible, what would be its aspect in relation to man's salvation? If the will of man is totally opposed to the law of God, and to the overtures of his grace, what would be the consequence, if, to its freedom, were added an independence which should exclude from it all control, except that of mere motives? I appeal to the experience of such as have seen and felt, that with infinite motives before them they had no heart to accept the gospel—no heart to come to Christ. Some of us have deeply felt, that though our will was free, it was nevertheless in bondage; free in its exercises, and yet so held with the cords of iniquity as never in a single instance to break loose from the influence of selfish motives. We have been convinced that all our selfish resolutions to cease from sin did not release us from its bondage; and that they had no power to effect our deliverance. We were shown, that a renunciation of the selfish principle would remove the separating wall between God and us; but our hearts, being wholly under the dominion of self-love, did not, and would not, consent to this renunciation. We saw that eternal life was offered us on the lowest possible conditions; and yet we were in the utmost danger of perishing, because we had no heart to comply with them. We were brought to see that no better conditions could be proposed, and that in our case no hope was to be derived from better means of grace, or from the increase of legal convictions. We were brought to see, that some more effectual power must be applied to our entirely depraved hearts, else we should never become interested in the atonement which had been made for our sins. If there are any of our fellow sinners who say, they have discovered no such obstinacy in their wills, no such deadly opposition to the terms of the gospel; we would answer, The time was when we did not make the discovery; but now we have made it. Nor can we easily be argued out of that which we have learned by experience. If our brethren have explored their hearts, and have discovered no such obstinacy, then must we conclude, that their hearts and ours are essentially different.

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## ARTICLE VIII.

REGENERATION IS A RADICAL CHANGE, EFFECTED IN THE HEART OF THE SINNER BY THE POWER OF GOD.

WE are now arriving at an interesting place in our progress through a system of revealed truth. Very many among those that have the lamp of life to guide them, seem not to have discovered this doctrine; or if they have included in their creed an article by this name, it has

been essentially different from the regeneration taught in the scriptures. Let it be our prayer to God to be guided into the truth relating to a doctrine, so vitally important, that the want of an experimental knowledge of it is declared to be sufficient to exclude any man from the kingdom of heaven.

This Article consists of two principal parts. The first relates to the *radical nature* of the change it contemplates, and the other to its *efficient cause*.

I. The Article asserts, that regeneration is a radical change in the heart of a sinner. Notice,

1. That the subject of this change is a *sinner*. None but sinners need regeneration. Holy creatures can be preserved in their present state, but they can not undergo a transformation, without its placing them among the enemies of God. Neither can a fallen creature be regenerated, except he be *entirely sinful*. Those creatures who have a mixed character (which is true concerning the children of God while they remain in the body) can "more and more die unto sin and live unto righteousness;" but they can not, in any proper sense, be *regenerated*, any more than a man who is now alive can hereafter *begin* to live. Notice,

2. This change is in the sinner's *heart*. The seat of the change is not in his body so as directly to effect any alteration in his animal frame. Nor does it alter the natural powers of his mind. It neither imparts any new faculty, such as understanding, imagination, memory, or the power of willing; nor does it take away any of those which already exist. The regenerated man has the same faculties which he had before, without increase or diminution as to number. The change consists in a *new heart* and a *new spirit*; not in a new spiritual substance, but in a new frame of spirit; or a new character given to that soul which before was entirely depraved. He is renewed in the spirit of his mind; or transformed by the renewing of his mind. Eph. iv. 22. Rom. xii. 2. All that which is wrong in the unregenerate, is comprehended in the wickedness of their heart. Their *heart* is deceitful and desperately wicked. Their *heart* is fully set to do evil. The Lord sees every imagination of the thoughts of man's *heart* to be only evil continually. As the state of the heart is, so is the character in God's sight. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the *heart*." "For as a man thinketh in his *heart*, so is he." Jer. xvii. 9. Eccl. viii. 11. Gen. vi. 5. 1 Sam. xvi. 7. Prov. xxii. 7. The state of the heart always determines the character in God's account; therefore no change whatever, that does not effect a change here, deserves to be called regeneration. I proceed to remark,

3. The change wrought in the sinner's heart is *radical*. *Radix* is a Latin word which signifies a root; and from this is derived the word *radical*. That improvement which is made in a tree by cutting off its dry branches, and white-washing its bark, will not alter its nature; but if the root, through which the sap passes into all the ramifications of the tree, could be essentially changed, it would transform the same limbs and branches into a different tree, which would yield another kind of fruit. To such a transformation as this, our divine Teacher alludes, when he says, "Make the tree good, and his fruit good." Matt.

xii. 33. Regeneration changes a bad into a good tree ; or, to drop the figure, a *bad* into a *good* man.

If regeneration is a renewal of the mind, no change in external forms can be the thing intended by it. That declaration of the apostle is in point : “ Neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” Gal. vi. 15. This will apply with equal force to baptism. They are both external signs of regeneration ; but what will the signs profit those who are destitute of the thing signified ? It was after the sorcerer had received Christian baptism, that Peter told him, he was in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. Acts viii. 13—23. Were a Jew, a Mahometan, or a pagan, to give up the religion of his fathers, and be baptized as a believer in the religion of Christ, this would not be enough to prove him to be a new creature ; for he might undergo a change of this sort, and yet remain in a state of unregeneracy.

Any change which merely relates to the manner of sinning ; such as a change from prodigality to parsimony ; or from niggardliness to generosity ; or from immorality to morality ; or irreligion to self-righteous religion, does not go to the root. Such alterations may take place, and yet leave the man the same at heart that he was before. The sinner’s purposing to become a Christian at some future time, does not constitute him a new creature ; for though the purpose is new, it is made in all the spirit of the old heart ; else he would not defer to a future time the performance of a present duty. Felix exhibited no evidence of any essential change of character, because, under an alarm of conscience, he intended at another time to hear Paul concerning the faith in Christ ; even though it might then have been his purpose, on the arrival of that more convenient season, to become one of his disciples. Nor does it necessarily prove the purpose to be any holier, because it relates to the present time. If a sinner may be actuated by selfish motives, in resolving to become a saint at some future time, why not in making a resolution which he designs to carry into effect immediately ? If the resolution be considered as a part of the renovated character, then he is a saint even when he resolves to be one ; and this is the very thing which prompts to the resolution. But in case it precedes his conversion, it is the resolution of an unsanctified heart, and must therefore be originated by selfish motives.

It is a case of frequent occurrence, that unrenewed men, who have supposed themselves to be on their dying bed, have resolved to give their hearts to God without any delay. And the recovery of such persons to health has often proved to demonstration, that a purpose to give the heart to God, even to do it without delay, is not always the same as actually doing it. When the Israelites at mount Sinai were awed by the terrific tokens of the Almighty’s presence, they cried out, “ All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient.” Ex. xxiv. 7. They said nothing about delay ; but the sequel showed, when they promised obedience, they had not an obedient heart. When the father, in the parable, said to his son, “ Go work *to-day* in my vineyard, he answered and said, I go, sir ; and went not.” Matt. xxi. 30. He did not object to the work required, nor the time proposed for his engaging in it : and yet his failing to do the work served to show, that though



he made a resolution to work in his father's vineyard, he did not make himself a new heart. Men may resolve to engage in the business of religion without delay; and the resolution not be prompted by love to God. And who will pretend that such a resolution can elevate sinners into the rank of saints? The stony ground hearers, described by the Savior in the parable of the sower, resolved not only to make an immediate entrance on the business of religion, but did enter and endure for a while; and yet they were strangers to the new birth. Mark iv. 17.

I would not, however, be understood to say that nothing is gained, when the careless sinner is made to resolve to pay an immediate attention to the one thing needful. Such a resolution will naturally bring him under the means of grace, and to more intense thought on the concerns of his soul; and these, in the hand of the Spirit, are things of no small importance.\*

Nothing short of a transition from *sin* to *holiness* forms a radical change. Among all the intelligent beings in the universe there can exist but two kinds of character; all must be either holy or sinful. Holiness has one common nature, and so has sin. Each has many branches proceeding from the same root. Supreme regard to one's own selfish interest is the root of all sin. The reverse of this is universal good will, or a regard to the glory of the infinite God, displayed in promoting the good of his great and eternal kingdom. As sin is selfish, holiness is disinterested. Now there is no way for a sinner to undergo a radical change, except by becoming holy: and he can not become holy without a new ultimate end or supreme object. It must therefore be very evident, that our turning from an irreligious course to a selfish religion, does nothing to constitute us new creatures. If we bring forth fruit unto *ourselves*, however abundant that fruit may be, we are in God's account *empty vines*. Hos. x. 1. And should we, actuated by interested motives, resolve to become disinterested, this would not transform us into new creatures. Let us suppose a man, who is so enlightened into the knowledge of Christian doctrines as to understand, that short of his giving up the selfish principle, in every shape, and becoming disinterested in his affections and pursuits, he can not be saved; he therefore concludes, for the sake of securing his salvation, to make the relinquishment required; and proceeds to do it on the spot. But has he really made any relinquishment of the selfish principle, because he has given up a selfish interest of minor importance, for the sake of securing one of greater importance? Is selfishness to be canonized because it reaches its desires into eternity? The exchange of selfish interests, even if it be those of time for those of

\* Pledges obtained from the unregenerate in relation to their duty, are often of great use to them. The pledge obtained by the temperance societies, has done immense good to sinners as well as saints. It is proper not only to urge an unregenerate man to read the Bible, and go to the sanctuary to hear it preached; to engage in the duties of the closet, and pay the most serious attention to the concerns of his soul; but to obtain a promise from him that he will immediately take up these neglected duties. But if, on obtaining his pledge to refrain from intoxicating drinks, and his promise to read and hear the word of God, and attend to the concerns of his soul, we were to intimate, that this was the transition from nature to grace; the ground we should take would be unscriptural and dangerous in the extreme; for nothing is more common than to resolve to do *right* from *wrong* motives.

eternity, constitutes no essential change of character. The contrast which is made by sin and holiness, is not between a small and great selfish interest; or between one which is temporal and one which is eternal. It is between loving *self* supremely, and loving *God* supremely; between laying up treasure for one's self, and being rich towards God; between men's living to themselves, and their living to Him who died for them. Luke xii. 21. 2 Cor. v. 15. "Whosoever," said Christ, "will lose his life for *my* sake, the same shall save it." But we have no promise of saving our life, because we lose it merely for the sake of saving it. To seek a *holy* salvation, is evidence of holiness in those who seek it; but where the impelling motives are of a selfish character, the greatest zeal in seeking it, indicates no better principle than that of unregenerate nature.

Having shown when a transformation of character is radical, and what is necessary to constitute such a change in the case of a totally depraved sinner, I proceed to bring scriptural proof to establish the point, that regeneration is such a change.

First. The *words* and *figures* by which it is represented, are adapted to make the impression on our minds, that the change is radical; not the mere pruning of an unfruitful tree, but the transforming of a corrupt into a good tree, by altering the very nature of its root. *Regeneration* (the word used in the Article) means the same as *re-begotten*; and when it is applied to men as moral agents, it must import a fundamental change of character. The same is imported by the expression *born again*. This supposes, that at the hour of his conversion there is an important sense in which a man begins his life a second time. The same radical change is implied in one's being called out of *darkness* into *marvellous light*. In the natural world, darkness and light are two of the most striking contrarieties. What, I would ask, can be more expressive of a change which is fundamental than a *new creation*? "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." Again, how entire is the difference between *death* and *life*: "You hath he quickened who were dead." "We have passed from death to life." Tit. iii. 5. John iii. 3. 1 Pet. ii. 9. 2 Cor. v. 17. Eph. ii. 1. 1 John, iii. 14.

Unrenewed nature is called the *old man*, and the renewed nature the *new man*, the *new heart*, the *new spirit*. The heart we have by nature, is termed a *heart of stone*, and that which is imparted by regeneration, a *heart of flesh*. Stone, which is hard and unfeeling, and flesh, which is tender and sensitive, when they are used to illustrate characters, indicate a radical difference. These, and other similar expressions found in the scriptures, refer to that transformation of character of which we speak; and do they not manifestly import, that it is not circumstantial, but radical? The scriptures do not represent it to be the melioration of a heart already in some measure good, but as the giving of a new heart; nor as imparting new degrees of vivacity; but rather life itself. Until born of the Spirit, we have not the breath of life; we are not spiritual, but carnal. Here spiritual life begins. I now appeal to every man who has read his Bible—Can you conceive of more expressive terms and figures, to denote a radical change in the sinner's character, than those made use of by the Spirit of inspiration for this purpose?

Secondly. The *names* made use of to distinguish from other men, the individuals who have experienced this change, evidently imply its radical nature. The scripture calls them *saints*, while other men are called *sinners*. It calls them the *righteous*, and other men the *wicked*. They are denominated the *godly*, and other men the *ungodly*; they the *friends*, and other men the *enemies* of God; they the *wheat*, other men the *chaff*; they the *gold*, and others the *dross*; they *something*, others *nothing*. Ps. i. 4—6; xvi. 3; xlv. 13; cxix. 119. John xv. 14. Luke xix. 27. Matt. iii. 12. Gal. vi. 3. These, and many other discriminating names, are made use of to draw a line of demarkation which shall separate the regenerate from the unregenerate: and can they possibly imply any thing less than *moral opposites*? If they can not, then regeneration is no circumstantial change, since the appellations and epithets, importing moral excellence, are wholly restricted to such as are regenerated.

Thirdly. That regeneration is a radical change, is made evident to all that are its subjects, by that *conviction of sin* which precedes it. Persons who have not thought intensely on religious matters, are apt to imagine, if any change be necessary to prepare them for heaven, it is nothing more than a circumstantial one. They suppose there are a few sinful practices which they need to abandon, and some neglected duties they must take up; and that as soon as they can bring their minds to adopt such amendments, they have passed through all the change that is necessary. But while such incorrect views on this subject are entertained, men continue in unregeneracy. The God of our salvation intends we shall know, that to pass from a state of moral death to life, is a great transition; and therefore by sharp convictions, whether of longer or shorter continuance, he makes us see and feel that we are not partially, but totally depraved; and that what we need is not some slight improvement, but a change of nature.

Fourthly. The radical nature of this change is made evident, by its leading its subjects to the exercise of *new affections*, and the performance of *new duties*. As soon as men are renewed in the spirit of their mind, and not before, they begin to love God, to repent of their sins, to put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, to delight in the character of his disciples, to exercise good will towards all men, and forgiveness towards their worst enemies. Those sinful practices which had been their delight, they now forsake, and those duties they had been wont to neglect through aversion, they now adopt as their chosen way of living. Being risen with Christ, they seek those things that are above. A life of godliness, uprightness, and self-government, is, for its own sake, now preferred to a life of impiety, dishonesty, and self-indulgence. The change must be radical which produces new affections, and renders pleasant that course of obedience to divine rules which was before painful.

Fifthly. That this change is radical, is proved by its *continuance*. Those changes which do not alter the nature of things, are not so apt to be permanent. This holds true both in the natural and moral world. Persons are seen to turn away their ears from the truth unto fables, and to turn away from a religious to an irreligious course. Nor is it unfrequent, that such apostacies happen among those who profess to



be the subjects of regeneration: but where this change is real, where it imparts a new nature, the seed remaineth; it is as permanent as life, yea, as permanent as existence. If regeneration were a circumstantial alteration in a man's life, such as the adoption of some new creed, or a new moral regimen, without any transformation of nature, no dependence could be made upon its abiding with us through all the vicissitudes of life, and accompanying us into the world of spirits. But since, where it is real, it always proves to be an abiding change, it can be nothing less than a transformation of the depraved heart. By means of it we have a nature that is new; yea, we become partakers of the *divine nature*, and henceforth live godly in Christ Jesus.

Sixthly. The radicalness of the change may be inferred from the influence it exerts, to place its subjects in an entirely *new position* under the divine government. On the one side of this line is *condemnation*, on the other, *justification*. Regeneration transforms us from a state of exposure to the curse of the law, to a state of freedom from the curse. The frowns of the Judge are exchanged for smiles. The regenerated, in distinction from all other men, enjoy the high privilege of communion with God. They are in a state of preparation for death, for which solemn event the unregenerated have no preparation. At the day of judgment a most important separation will be made between all the millions of our race, and the dividing line will be drawn, with a perfect exactness, by the change which we are now contemplating. On the right hand of Christ will be the whole company of the regenerate, while all the unregenerate will go to the left. If the change were not radical, how could this separation be made? The difference between *rich* and *poor* is too circumstantial to render it possible to draw such a line between them as to determine to which of these classes every man belongs. The same difficulty would attend the dividing of the healthy from the diseased; but to distinguish between the living and the dead, is attended with no such difficulty, for the difference is perfectly plain. And in His view who trieth the hearts, the difference between converted and unconverted men is no less plain and distinguishable. The number of the converted, to a unit, is known to Him; and He can separate them all from the residue of men; not as a shepherd divides the well fed from the lean of his flock, but with the same ease as he divides the sheep from the goats. Matt. xxv. 32.

The point being settled, as I trust, that regeneration is not a circumstantial, but radical change, and one which takes place in the sinner's heart, I shall proceed to consider,

II. Its *efficient cause*. The Article ascribes the regenerating change to the *power of God*. Though different causes operate to bring about the sinner's conversion, there is *one* which is pre-eminent. The power of God is the *sole efficient cause* of the change in question. The supreme efficient cause may produce the effect, without the aid of those which are subordinate; but the subordinate would be wholly ineffectual of themselves. God can produce bread without the labor of the husbandman, and even without the seed he sows, or any other subordinate cause; but neither of these, nor all of them combined, could produce it without Him.

The efficient cause in the sinner's regeneration differs from all other

causes, in the *directness* or *immediateness* of its operation. There are only two conceivable ways by which he can be reached? the one is by placing truth before him to attract his attention, the other by an immediate operation on his mind. The first serves to show him the thing he ought to be willing to do; the other works in him both to will and to do. For the sake of distinction, we term the first *indirect* influence; for, though the mind is approached, it is not, in the most proper sense, *touched*. This influence, though used with great thoroughness, may nevertheless fail of producing the desired effect. It is merely persuasive, and therefore, to distinguish it from a direct influence, it has usually been denominated *moral suasion*. In this way alone can created beings reach one another's minds. If there is no being who can reach them in any other way, then it will follow, that if moral suasion cannot collect strength enough to convert the sinner, his conversion is in every respect impossible.

I am aware that on the subject of the efficient cause of regeneration, the Christian world is not wholly united. I have reviewed this part of my doctrinal series with diligence, and with prayer for direction. If my former views have been wrong; if their tendency is to eclipse the glory of God, or hinder the salvation of men, it has been my earnest prayer that I might exchange them for those of a more favorable tendency. But, thus far, the result of my prayers and investigations has been to confirm me, in what, I believe, has been the commonly received opinion of the orthodox, namely; That the efficient cause of regeneration is not moral suasion, but a more direct influence of the Spirit of God on the mind.

I do not see how there can be more than two opinions on this controverted point. If there be no *direct influence*, then the sinner's conversion is effected by *moral suasion alone*. It matters not who makes use of it, whether it be a man, or an angel, or the Almighty God; if no direct influence be used, the conversion is wholly the effect of moral suasion; it must be ascribed exclusively to the power of motives. In favor of something more than *moral suasion*, even a direct divine influence, I would state,

1. That such influence is *possible*. It is not, in the nature of things, absurd; and therefore cannot be impossible with God. He that "formeth the spirit of man within him," must be able to have the most direct access to that spirit which he has formed. In originating an immaterial substance, creative power must have been as direct on the thing produced, as in originating a substance which is material. And we should entertain unsuitable conceptions of the all-sufficiency of the Creator, were we to suppose that spirits, as soon as they are brought into being, are so beyond his control that he can no longer reach them by any influence more direct than what lies within the power of dependent agents. Is it any more incomprehensible that the Almighty, in distinction from all dependent agents, should have power to operate directly on our hearts, than that he, in distinction from all others, should be able to search them, so as intuitively to discern all our unexpressed thoughts? I know that contradictions are not objects of power, even of unlimited power. To some it may appear to be nothing less than a contradiction, to say that God by a direct influence gives us a char-

acter ; that the character should be *ours*, and yet be so directly from his forming hand. But why is this any more contradictory in the new creation, than in the first ? When God made man he created him in his own image ; he made him upright. Does not this imply, that as soon as man existed an intelligent creature he had a holy character, for which he was as immediately indebted to his Creator, as for his existence ? That the image of God meant something more than those mental powers, by which he might form such a character for himself, is made evident by what is said concerning the new man that is renewed after the divine image ; and this image is declared to consist in righteousness and true holiness. Eph. iv. 24. Col. iii. 10. It is, I find, becoming with some a theological axiom, (as if it were too evident to admit of contradiction,) That while to create moral agents is not too hard for the Lord, yet to create their character transcends his power. *This*, they say, must be formed by themselves, independently of any creative act of His. But why should this position be considered as self-evident ? Have the scriptures so represented it ? If God's creating Adam in his own image, be explained to mean nothing more than his endowing him with a capacity for a holy character, how will such an explanation apply to the new creation ? The sinner is said to be renewed after the image of him who created him. Yet long before this renovation, he has reason, and all the necessary capabilities for a holy character. He needs nothing of this sort more than he already possesses. A creation after the image of God, can therefore, in his case, imply nothing less than the imparting of a new and holy character ; for in no other sense will his mind admit of a new creation.

Have *facts* shown it to be self-evident, that while the Deity can create moral capacity, he can not create moral character ? He created an innumerable multitude of angels, and at the very commencement of their existence every individual of them possessed a holy character. He created two distinct individuals, to be the parents of mankind ; and they were not both made at once : yet, on their first entrance into the intellectual system, they both took one way, and that was "the way of holiness." If God did not give these creatures their moral nature, as well as their capability for it, how is it to be accounted for, that they all took such a course as they did ? Are we not taught by these specimens of the Creator's works, that he has power to fill the universe with worlds, and these worlds with intelligent creatures, and give to every one of these creatures a holy character : or, in other words, that it is as completely an object of his power, to endow intelligencies with a moral nature, as to impart to the different species of material substances their respective laws, or physical natures ? If the race of Adam had not by means of the fall received a moral nature, and one that was depraved, it would be difficult to account for this striking fact, that among the innumerable millions who have been born into the world, they have all, with the exception of one individual, (I refer to that wonderful person called the SEED OF THE WOMAN,) inclined to a wrong course.

I know that the natural order of things requires, that we conceive of the faculties of the mind as preceding its character ; but it is not necessary that we give them a precedence in the order of time. A planet is a moving body. If such a body did not exist, of course it could not



move : but surely it was in the Creator's power to give it motion simultaneously with its existence. And who will say, that he cannot create an intelligent being, whose existence and character shall commence together ? In order to give excellence or turpitude to his character, it is by no means necessary that we conceive of him as first existing a mere blank, devoid of all moral propension. If it be, why must we not form a similar conception of God himself ; why must we not conceive of Him as existing with infinite capacities, before he had any holiness ? If the holiness of Deity can be conceived of as extending back to the very eternity of his existence, without destroying its praise-worthiness, I see no reason why we should be thought to detract from that excellence of character which the scriptures attribute to our first parents, though we should believe it to have commenced as early as their creation. If natural attributes and moral perfection are coeval in the Creator, I see nothing absurd in the supposition of their being coeval in his creatures ; and if this be so, then his agency must have been as direct in giving them their benevolence, as in giving them capabilities for its exercise. I have dwelt at some length on the *possibility* of God's imparting a moral nature to his intelligent creatures, because I am satisfied, that if men can be made to believe its possibility, they will be convinced that this is the most consistent and scriptural method of accounting for that wonderful change, which transforms an enemy into a friend of God.

2. *The contrast* which the scriptures make *between God's agency and that of all others*, in effecting the sinner's conversion, gives us reason to believe that His, in distinction from theirs, is direct. The sinner, who experiences the new birth, is said to be born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. John i. 13. Here three ways of accounting for the change are supposed, (and they seem designed to comprehend all other supposable ways,) for the sake of informing us, that neither of them furnishes an adequate cause for the effect. He is not born of blood ;—he has not received his holy character by natural birth, as he would have done if the first man had not corrupted his race. Nor is he born of the will of the flesh ;—his unrenewed nature has not become so well inclined as to transform itself. Nor is he born of the will of man ;—no man, nor company of men, (not excepting the most faithful ministers of the word) have put forth any power, either physical or moral, which has effected this change. After all these agencies have been set aside as having no claim, singly or collectively, to the honor of producing this great and merciful change, the true cause is declared, namely, the agency of God. Though men are at other times represented as exceedingly helpful in bringing about the conversion of their fellow men, in this passage they are represented as doing nothing ; God claims the honor of doing it all. Nor is it because he is the Creator and Sustainer of those men who are the instruments of the conversion of sinners, that he claims to be the sole agent in its accomplishment ; but because he puts forth an influence of his own, distinct from that which he exerts through them ; and because this influence, which is peculiarly his own, is the thing that proves effectual to produce the desired change. This distinction between what he does by his instruments, and what he does by his own

almighty arm, is clearly marked by the apostle when he says, "I have planted, Apollos watered ; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth ; but God that giveth the increase." 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7. The reason which he assigns, why the ministers of the word were to consider themselves to be nothing in comparison with God, was not because they were instruments which he had furnished with all the power of doing good, but because their best efforts were wholly dependent on him for success. Even when he had enabled them to scatter the seed, to ever so great advantage, it depended on his own divine influence whether any of it should vegetate and grow.

This fundamental difference between human and divine agency, in effecting the sanctification of minds, can not have escaped the notice of the attentive reader of the Bible. And does not such a difference clearly imply, that God has a way of access to the mind quite peculiar to himself ? We have already seen, that there are but two conceivable ways in which the mind can be reached, namely, by what is presented before it, to arrest its attention, and by a direct influence. In the former way creatures can influence each other. When we, whose spirits dwell in houses of clay, would exert an influence on our fellow mortals, we are obliged to make our communications with our external organs, and to get access to their minds through the medium of their bodily senses. But spirits, which are not clothed with flesh, can reach our minds by a shorter course. While they do not come to us through the senses, they probably exert their influence on the *sensorium*, the seat of the sensitive nerves, from whence the mind receives their communications. In the same way can our minds be approached by the Infinite Spirit. But in whatever way ideas are presented before our minds, whether through the medium of the external senses, or the *sensorium*, or in the manner unembodied spirits make their communications to each other, still it does not constitute what is intended by a direct influence. Were I to come so near a man as to speak into his ear, the influence that I should exert upon him would be no more direct, than if I were to speak from a distance. And in case I had power to impress the same ideas on the *sensorium*, without making use of the external organs of sensation, still it would not come under the class of direct influence. In whatever way, and by whatever agent, whether human, angelic, or Divine, that thoughts are suggested to our minds which do not emanate from them, as our own voluntary exercises, the influence exerted upon us is indirect ; it still remains optional with us whether to be swayed by it or not. But an influence which so immediately operates upon the mind as to cause it to put forth volitions, is direct. This is the influence which I have ever supposed the scriptures attribute to God, in his work of renewing the hearts of the children of men.

The force of my present argument, to establish the point, that in renewing the hearts of men God makes use of a direct influence, is this ; that he sometimes claims to be the *Doer* of this work, in a sense so peculiar as to exclude all coadjutors. The claim is not merely that he does more than any one of them, or all of them collectively ; but that there is a part of this work, even the most difficult part, which is peculiar to himself ; so that he does it alone. But if we adopt the

sentiment, that he exerts no influence but that which is indirect, that he merely presents motives to move the mind, it would represent God to be nothing more than an invisible preacher. I cannot see why invisibility should give to the presenter of motives such an infinite superiority. If the Holy Ghost, without employing any efficiency on the heart, regenerates wholly by what I now term invisible preaching, I see no reason why the Divinity, rendered visible in the person of the Redeemer, could not have preached so well, and presented motives to such advantage, as to secure the conversion of his hearers. The Redeemer, besides speaking as never man spake, enjoyed an opportunity, which no invisible preacher could do, of giving force to his doctrine by a *living* and perfect example.\*

3. We notice *there is such a marked distinction made between the different operations of God himself*, in effecting the transformation of sinful into holy minds, as very naturally leads us to believe, that one mode of his operating is by a direct influence on the heart. He is spoken of as sometimes trying what he can do by moral means, by light and truth, by promises and threatenings, mercies and judgments; and then as employing a gracious influence more directly on that rebellious heart, which had effectually resisted every effort that had been made to reclaim it. At one time he is spoken of as testifying against the sins of Israel by his Spirit in the prophets, and they would not give ear: but at another time he pours out his Spirit upon them, and a great revival of religion is the immediate result. Neh. ix. 30. Isa. xlv. 3—5. At one time, he entreats them not to profane and pollute his holy name; and still they profane and pollute it: but at another, he turns to the people a pure language, so that they call upon the name of the Lord, and serve him with one consent. And now he declares that *he will not let them pollute his holy name any more*. Zeph. iii. 9. Ezek. xxxix. 7. Before this he had written to them the great things of his law; but now *he puts his law in their inward parts, and writes it in their hearts*. Hos. viii. 12. Jer. xxxi. 33. The Lord speaks of himself as using severe corrections and other means to reclaim backsliding Israel, when a deterioration, rather than an improvement of character, was the result: he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. But, instead of being discouraged with his increased frowardness, he says, “I have seen his ways, and will heal him.” Isa. lvii. 17, 18. In the Book of Songs, the heavenly bridegroom is represented as making full proof of moral suasion, to gain a re-admission into the heart of his ungrateful spouse. He presented himself at her door, where he knocked long and loud, and used the most affecting arguments to induce her to arise and open to him. But this was all to no effect, until he put in his hand by the hole of the door; and then her bowels were moved for him. Sol. Song, v. 2—4. Are not the two kinds of influence of which we have been speaking, here distinctly marked; and is it not done with a design to teach us, that Christ can get access to us more directly than by mere persuasion; that he can reach the internal bolt by which

\* That scheme of doctrine, which denies to God the power of a direct efficiency, has a natural tendency to expose us to be looking for his operations upon the *brain*, rather than upon the heart; and to make us call unaccountable impressions, rather than holy affections, the fruits of the Spirit.



we have locked him out of our hearts? When the prophet Ezekiel was employed to raise to life a valley of dry bones, his work was divided into two distinct parts; the first was, to speak to the bones themselves, and say, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord; the other was, to prophesy to the wind to come and animate them. Tho' the first was not without its use, and the Lord's hand was very manifest in the effect produced, yet it imparted no life. Had not the Lord breathed into them the breath of life, they would assuredly have remained breathless corpses. Ezek. xxxvii. 1—10. Created agents can make use of a great variety of moral means, but they cannot insure success to any of them; for the mind itself is not within their reach: but God can work upon the mind, and can work in it to will and to do. His working worketh in us mightily. It is a power that worketh in us, whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself. Col. 1. 29. Eph. iii. 20. Phil. iii. 21.

4. That a direct efficiency is needed to produce the change in question, is manifest by the *experience of those who have become its subjects*. A sinner, when first awakened from inattention to spiritual things, often imagines that all which is necessary to effect his conversion, is, that he should enjoy better means than he has done, hear more impressive preaching, and spend a greater portion of time in attending to the interests of the soul. But an increasing conviction shows him that the leprosy lies deep within. After he has been doctrinally enlightened concerning the claims of God, and the vile nature of sin; and has had placed before him the weightiest motives to reconciliation which the subject can furnish, he finds himself still unreconciled; nothing better, but continually growing worse. He now experimentally learns the meaning of those scripture testimonies concerning the wickedness of the human heart; "The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." "The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." "No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." "Which were born—not of the will of the flesh." Eccl. viii. 11. Rom. viii. 7. John vi. 44; i. 13. By an actual acquaintance with his depraved heart, he perceives there is no hope that it will regenerate itself; or that he shall ever become a subject of the second birth by the will of the flesh. He is now convinced, that preaching and other means of grace cannot be of so good a character as to insure his conversion. It is made clear to his mind, that he is obstinately opposed to the reconciliation required, and to a relinquishment of that selfish principle, which he now perceives has governed every action of his life. Thus it becomes demonstrated by his own experience, that to effect his conversion, there needs a power which can do something more than array motives before his mind; even a power, that can cause a stubborn mind to yield to those motives the force of which he now knows he ought always to have felt. If after this discovery of the plague of his own heart, his feelings become so altered that a holy God is the object of his supreme love, he does not hesitate to say, that this love has been shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. When, instead of being a rebel, he finds himself to be a willing subject, he wonders at that power that has conquered his rebellion. Is he now

alive unto God? he is ready to say, It is God himself, who is rich in mercy, that quickened me, even when I was dead in sins.

5. The directness of the divine operation in effecting this change, may be inferred from its *instantaneousness*. There is, I believe, a general consent among those who adopt what is called the *grace system*, that regeneration is not a gradual, but an instantaneous transformation of the mind. We are agreed in the sentiment, that every man is either a saint or a sinner, a friend or an enemy of God. This point was decided by Christ, when he said, "He that is not with me is against me." In the concerns of this life, when men are revolutionized by the force of argument, the change is gradual. They are won over by degrees, according to the number and strength of the arguments which are presented to their minds. So it is also in many of their religious changes, such as that from infidelity to a belief of the scriptures; or from heresy to orthodoxy; or from a thoughtless neglect of spiritual things to a state of conviction. But there is nothing gradual in the transition from nature to grace, from unregeneracy to regeneration. He who is at one moment an entire sinner, a mere natural man, is the next moment a spiritual man. If you account for the matter, by saying, that before this crisis he was almost brought over to the side of righteousness, so that it needed but a little additional weight to turn the scale, you make the change to be gradual. The entire depravity of the heart does not prevent the increase of conviction in the mind; but this, instead of weakening the selfish principle, actually strengthens it. I can see no rational or scriptural way to account for it, that a mind, which under moral means of the first order has continued to grow worse, should all at once, in the twinkling of an eye, become possessed of an entirely new character; without supposing a new kind of influence to be exerted to effect it. A mere augmentation of the same kind of indirect influence, which had always proved ineffectual, would not account for so sudden a transition from an unabated enmity, to the exercise of cordial love.

6. That the divine agency in regeneration is the effectuating cause of the change, and that it is direct, may be inferred from its *irresistibleness*. Nothing can prevent its successful operation. Wherever and whenever God sees fit to exert this agency, it never returns void, but always accomplishes the thing which was intended. He declares, "I will work, and who shall let it?" "He quickeneth whom he will;" and "has mercy on whom he will have mercy." I may add, He has mercy *when* he will have mercy. If at any time Christ say to a man who has a leprous soul, as he once did to one who had a leprous body, "I will, be thou clean," he is *immediately* cleansed. Isa. xliii. 13. John v. 21. Rom. ix. 15. Matt. viii. 2, 3. The moment in which God exerts regenerating power, regeneration is the result; just as Lazarus was raised from the dead as soon as Christ exerted his life-giving power. He had spent some time before this in coming to Bethany, where the dead was; and, to prepare the way for the more consistent manifestation of his power, he had taken measures to excite the faith of Martha and Mary. By them he was conducted to the place where their brother lay entombed. After he had arrived at the sepulchre, he directed them to take away the stone from the door: and having pray-

ed to his Father, "he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth ! And he that was dead came forth." There is a sense in which Christ was all this time attempting the resurrection of Lazarus ; yet we must all be agreed in the belief, that at the very moment he put forth a quickening influence, the dead was raised. What he did before this was not the exertion of a resurrection power, but was only preparatory to it.

These remarks will doubtless apply to the work of regeneration. Among those who are dead in trespasses and sins, God quickens whom he will, and he does it when he will. He may occupy much time in raising the faith of Christians, and may stir them up to remove those stumbling stones and rocks of offense, which form a moral impediment to the resurrection of their friends. And much time may be taken up in convincing those who are dead in sins, that they need a resurrection to holiness ; but when the way is prepared for this special divine operation, nothing can for a moment prevent the transition from death to life.

I do not see any other way of accounting for it, that God renews just such sinners as he pleases, and just when he pleases, but by adopting the sentiment, that he has a way of access to their minds which is peculiar to himself. If men are wicked enough to resist all the means of grace used with them, to bring them to repentance ; to resist means so many and so excellent, as to render it proper for the all-sufficient God to say, "What could have been done more that I have not done ?" it can hardly be supposed, that, without a direct influence on the heart, he should be able to subdue the stoutest rebel in the enemy's camp, and to do it at any time he pleases. For the most part, such as have denied the immediateness of the divine influence, have also denied its uncontrollable power.\*

7. That the agency of God in regeneration is direct, may be argued from what is said of the *greatness* of that power which it displays. The Father, in giving the Son the heathen for his inheritance, says to him, "Thy people shall be willing in the *day of thy power*." This implies that the change which we are considering is a pre-eminent manifestation of the power of God. The apostle speaks of it not only as manifesting his *power*, but the *greatness*, yea, the *exceeding* greatness of his power. He illustrates it by the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead. Eph. i. 19, 20. But if the Supreme Agent exerts no direct influence on the mind, what does He more than others ? What influence does He exert to effect the sinner's conversion, which is not exerted by his ministers ? *They* present

\* Some may think that the doctrine of an *irresistible* divine influence, stands opposed to the declaration which Stephen made to the Jews, when he said, "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." This declaration of the proto-martyr, serves to make an exhibition of what is the real disposition of all natural men, whether Jews or Gentiles. They do always, in some way or other, resist the Holy Ghost, whether he approaches them by his instruments, or by his own influences. But in regeneration the rebellious will, without having given any previous consent to the thing, is divested of its rebellion, and therefore ceases to make resistance. The influence which divests the will of its rebellion is properly denominated *irresistible*, not so much because it happens not now to be effectually resisted, but rather because it could not have been thus resisted. When God's power is exerted on the rebellious will itself, to render it submissive, it submits of course ; when he turns it, it is turned. Ps. cx. 3. Jer. xxxi. 18.



truth, even his own truth ; and he himself presents none except what is found in the repository to which they have access. On the day of Pentecost, it was the preaching of Peter which appeared to produce conviction in the minds of his hearers ; and it was this which drew forth their love ; for it is said, “ they gladly received the word,” that is, the word which they heard from the lips of the apostle. If there was no influence of the Spirit exerted, to give them a disposition to receive the truth, why ought not the whole effect to be ascribed to Peter ? Why is it to be considered as a special manifestation of the power of God, and even of the exceeding greatness of his power ?

But some will say, It is the scheme of a direct influence, that takes away all the glory of God’s power in this affair ; since it makes it nothing superior to a mere physical agency upon matter. But does it give us a diminutive view of that power which the Creator exerted in calling into existence a world of minds, to know that he did it by a physical agency ? (for none, I conclude, will suppose he did it by the force of moral suasion.) And does mere moral influence keep this world of minds, either in being or in operation ?\* If it be a fact, that all the inhabitants of this revolted world are so hostile to the Supreme King, as to make it quite certain they will never be reduced to subjection by mere moral influence, I think it is not at all calculated to give us a contemptible idea of his power, to be told, that by an agency peculiarly his own, he can reach the spring of action in their hearts, and cause them immediately and cheerfully to yield their consent to those terms of grace, which he had a thousand times proffered them, and which they had as often rejected. In effecting this revolution in their minds, he neither adds nor takes away a single faculty. He neither destroys, nor impairs, nor suspends, the free agency of his creatures : and yet he imparts to them a new and amiable character ; but one to which they were totally averse, until by his grace they were made to possess it.

One thing is no more difficult for God to accomplish than another ; but some things do more than others to make his power known. The display of power is greater, when the effect produced is *supernatural*, than when it is natural. His direct efficiency may be either natural or supernatural, both upon matter and mind. A direct efficiency is needed to preserve life in an animated body ; but to restore life to a dead body, it needs also to be supernatural. If this agency be no more direct than that which is natural, it is nevertheless a much greater manifestation of omnipotence. The resuscitation of a dead body is more wonderful than the preservation of a living one. On this account Christ was glad that he was not at Bethany during the sickness of his friend Lazarus. John xi. 15. Therefore our Lord’s resurrection from the dead is made use of by the apostle, to illustrate the exceeding great-

\* By *mere moral influence*, I mean that which is effected by motives without direct efficiency. There are some among those that believe in direct efficiency, who think, since the influence put forth in regeneration, is all exerted on the mind of a moral agent, and the means used are of a moral nature, and the result is a moral change ; and since it is all effected in such a way as neither to destroy nor interrupt the freedom of the will, that it is proper to denominate the whole a *moral influence*. If we use the phrase in this sense, we need to be cautious lest we should be understood to teach, that regeneration is effected solely by the power of motives.

ness of that power which God displays in changing our wicked hearts. When his operations are in accordance with the nature of things, his hand, though constantly employed, is not so clearly seen. A living man is active in the use of means to preserve his own life ; but a dead man does nothing to resuscitate himself. If death is exchanged for life, it is the finger of God. His agency must be both direct and supernatural. In preserving the holy character of the angels, God exerts a direct, but not a supernatural influence ; but in recovering lost men to holiness, his influence is supernatural as well as direct. Hence it is that this, much more than that, makes known the exceeding greatness of his power.

8. A direct efficiency of the Spirit of God on the mind, may be inferred from the doctrine of *infant regeneration*. As the lifting up of the brazen serpent on the pole did not prevent the fiery serpents from continuing their poisonous bite in the camp of Israel, so the provision of an atonement for sin has not prevented the descent of a corrupt nature through all the generations of men. But as soon as the broken covenant has thus gone into effect ; as soon as the old serpent's bite has poisoned the soul of the infant, the poison can be immediately removed by the grace of regeneration, which is obtained through the sacrifice of him who was lifted up on the cross. All who believe in the depravity of infants, must also believe in the necessity of their renovation, in order to their preparation for heaven. The Savior speaks of the second birth as necessary for all who have passed through the first. John iii. 6, 7. But as an infant's mind, especially in its earliest days, is incapable of receiving the least instruction concerning its Creator and Redeemer, we must despair of effecting a change of its nature by the efficacy of moral means. But if the Spirit of God has power to operate directly on a depraved mind, so as to change its nature, then we can see how a young child can be prepared for a heaven of holiness.

In the same way may regenerating grace be extended to those deaf mutes, who, if they go through life without enjoying such peculiar means of instruction as are adapted to their circumstances, will never know that they have a Creator ; or that they have a soul to save. If idiots have immortal souls, whose faculties are for the present imprisoned, they may nevertheless be transformed by the immediate operation of the Spirit, though their minds are wholly incapacitated for receiving that common preparation for the change, which is made by enlightening the understanding and awakening the conscience. Some there are, that in their outset in life exhibited evidence of a bright intellect, who are now, and probably will hereafter remain, incapable of being brought to Christ by the power of motives. Is there no hope for such ? May we not ask God to renew the hearts of this unfortunate class of our fellow men ?

In showing the efficient cause of regeneration, I have thus far spoken of it as effected by the *power of God*, irrespective of any distinction between the persons of the Godhead : and so the scriptures often speak of it. But when they treat of it as *official* work, they ascribe it to the HOLY GHOST, whose office it is to apply the redemption purchased by Christ. In the character of a prophet, Christ taught the way of God

perfectly ; and in the character of a priest he made a complete atonement for sin ; but our turning from the power of Satan unto God, is effected by his pouring out his Spirit upon us, and thus making known his words unto us. Prov. i. 23. The Savior, when he discoursed with Nicodemus on the doctrine of the new birth, taught him that the change was to be attributed to the agency of the Spirit. It was in view of this, as the Spirit's official work, that he represented it as expedient for himself to go away, to make room for the Spirit to come. The regenerating work, which distinguished the day of Pentecost, is ascribed to the Spirit's agency. In Paul's epistle to Titus, he speaks of the change which is wrought in the hearts of all the children of God, as being effected by the renewing of the Holy Ghost. And with this agrees the testimony of Peter, who represents the gospel to be preached (i. e. successfully) with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

The doctrine, which is the subject of this Article, is found in both Testaments. The Old Testament speaks of the circumcision of the heart ; of changing a heart of stone into a heart of flesh ; of creating a clean heart and renewing a right spirit ; and of washing the heart from wickedness. Well, then, might Christ reproach Nicodemus for his being so totally unacquainted with this doctrine : "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?"

The scriptures do not represent the new birth as merely desirable ; they assert its *absolute necessity*—not for one nation or class of men, in distinction from others ; but for all nations and classes of men. They give none of us the least encouragement to consider ourselves to be in the way of life, if we did not enter the way through the strait gate of regeneration. Some, perhaps, will say, that the scriptures tell us of many good men, of whose conversion we have not the least intimation. There is no account, for example, of the conversion of Abel, Enoch, Noah, and others ; does not this prove that the change in question is not, in every case, indispensably requisite ? This objection to the universal necessity of regeneration, has no weight at all ; as will appear by the following illustration : Let me suppose a certain road, concerning which we are informed on the best authority, that none ever traveled upon it without their entering by a particular gate ; and concerning some of the travelers we are informed of the time and circumstances of their making such entrance : but concerning others the information we receive relates wholly to the progress, and not to the commencement of their journey. I now demand, whether it be fair, from the circumstance of this omission, to infer, that these last did not enter the road by the gate ? A mere silence in the narrative with regard to this particular does not amount to a denial of the fact. Two of the evangelists give us an account of the birth of the Savior, and the other two say nothing of it. But who will pretend that Mark and John deny his birth ? That unequivocal declaration of the divine teacher, "Except a man be born again he can not see the kingdom of God," clearly proves that no man can be traveling in the way which leads to the kingdom of God, but he who has experienced this spiritual birth.

In view of what has been said concerning divine efficiency, as the cause of the sinner's transformation, some man may say, "Now I thought it was the sinner's duty to change his heart himself, according



to the command of God. And would not the writer have been better employed in urging his compliance with this duty, than to have spent his time in telling him to expect another agent to do it for him?" Does the objector mean to say, that what I have taught concerning the necessity of a divine interposition to effect this change, is unscriptural? Or does he mean to say, there is no harmony between such dependence and such obligation? The dependence, if I mistake not, has been shown to be clearly taught in the scriptures. Nor is the sinner's obligation to make himself a new heart any less evident; for every command in the Bible which is addressed to an unregenerate man, as well as that in the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel, does in effect require him to make a new heart. Every depraved creature in the universe, not only in this world of hope, but in the world of despair, is bound to do this, and to do it without the least delay. Every moral agent is under obligation to possess a right heart: and if his heart is now entirely sinful, there is no way for it to be in any measure right, except by its becoming a new heart. The obligation extends to every sinner, whether aided or unaided by the spirit; but this furnishes no proof that a single man, without the Spirit's aid, will yield to that obligation.

But how, it will be said, is it consistent that the same work should be attributed to God, and to ourselves; and that we should be required to do what God does for us? To this seeming difficulty, I would reply in the *first* place; I see nothing inconsistent in the thing—that God should help us accomplish what he requires us to do. The angels who were sent to bring Lot and his family out of Sodom, first called on them to arise and quit the place; but when they perceived them to linger, they laid hold on their hands to help them comply with what they had required them to do. And who will say, there was any contradiction between what they required of them, and what they did for them? But as a *second* reply, I would say; the thing which we are required to do is not the identical thing that God does for us. When God commands the sinner to make himself a new heart, the thing which he requires him to do, is to put forth new and holy exercises, such as love, repentance and faith; but the thing that God does, when he gives him a new heart, is not to love, repent and believe for him, but to incline his heart to put forth these holy exercises. There is the same difference between the act of God in turning the sinner to himself, and the sinner's act in turning to God, as there is between *Creator* and *creature*. In both cases the latter is the effect of the former; but the thing produced has an existence as distinct from that of its cause, as if it were wholly independent of it.

But it will be said; since the cause is antecedent to the effect, and necessary to its existence, why should the sinner be required to put forth holy affections, and be held responsible for them, so long as God withholds that influence which is requisite to their production? To this I would reply, The sinner, though he is spiritually denominated "nothing," has a real existence as much as the saint, and is as free an agent as any other creature: he needs no additional strength of any kind to render him capable of moral action. He is under present obligation to act right. His need of renewing grace to prepare him to do so, arises wholly from his unreasonable propensity to evil. Holy af-

fections are therefore required of him, whether regenerating grace be given or withheld. When given, it is not for the purpose of creating an obligation to exercise such affections : but rather to cause him to act in conformity to the obligation which already rests upon him.

Ought a sinner (it will be asked) to think he can make himself a new heart, when the fact is, that if God does not help him do it, the thing will never be done ? I reply, His thoughts on this, as well as on every other subject, should accord with the truth. He ought to know that it is not *weakness*, but *wickedness*, which hinders him from making a new heart, in conformity to the divine requirement. He ought also to know, that it is the gracious influence of the Spirit, which furnishes the least hope, that this guilty impediment to his salvation will ever be removed. That it is proper he should receive instruction on this point, may be learned from the example of a teacher, whose wisdom in winning souls can not be questioned. When the Savior preached the doctrine of regeneration to Nicodemus, who was then an unregenerate man, he taught him very distinctly such things as these : 1st. Its absolute and universal necessity. 2d. The agency of the Spirit in its production. 3d. The ground of its necessity, viz. man's native and entire depravity. 4th. The spirituality, or holy nature of the change. 5th. The imperceptibleness (except in its effects) of that agency by which it is produced. In using means to effect the conversion of this self-righteous pharisee, he very explicitly taught him his dependence on God for the change. John iii. 1—8.

Among those who acknowledge that depraved men need some agency beside their own to effect their conversion, there may be some who will think it strange that the writer has dwelt so long on the agency of the Spirit, when the scriptures speak of other agencies which are employed in effecting the same desirable change. I know that it is sometimes attributed to the inspired word, and sometimes to the gospel ministry, and to other dependent causes. David says, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul;" and Peter describes converts as being born of incorruptible seed, even the word of God, that liveth and abideth forever. James speaks of it as a practicable thing, that one man should convert another from the error of his ways ; and Paul tells the Corinthian Christians he had begotten them through the gospel. Thus it appears, that the conversion of sinners is attributed sometimes to the *word*, sometimes to *men*, and at other times to *the Spirit of God*. But can it be inferred from this, that there is such an equality between these different agencies, as to make it proper to consider each one as covering the whole ground ? To make myself understood, I will state : The scriptures speak at one time of the Father, then of the Son, and again of the Spirit, as exerting an influence to draw, teach, and renew the hearts of depraved men. Now we shall all agree in the belief, that the whole of that work which one of these Divine Persons can do, the others can do likewise ; since they are all equal in power. But when Paul says to the Corinthians, "I have begotten you through the gospel," are we to understand him to assert, that he did it in as full a sense, as God did the same work, when it is said, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth ?" God had power to do his work without Paul ; but Paul had no power to do his without God. Nor

should I dare to pronounce it an impossibility for God to do this work, if he saw fit, without making use of the word ; but it is not possible for the word to do it without the accompanying agency of God. This matter may be illustrated by recurring once more to the resurrection of Lazarus. There were different agents made use of in bringing about this event. His sisters before his death had sent a request to Jesus for a visit. When they heard he was coming, they went to meet him. Their faith, imperfect as it was, had some influence in procuring the resurrection of their brother. They took away the stone from the grave's mouth. Thus far their agency extended. But in his translation from death unto life, they stood still and saw the salvation of God. Their Master wrought alone, without any agency of theirs. *His* agency covered all the ground ; since it was he who raised their faith, and gave them strength to take away the obstructing stone ; but *theirs* did not extend to the act of bursting the bands of death. Nor was this done by some occult power in those words which were addressed to the dead. There was an energy accompanying the words, entirely distinct from any that the words themselves possessed ; and this was the thing which did the execution.

Far be it from me to undervalue the inspired word, or the ministry of reconciliation. Where these means are wanting, sinners usually remain in an unconverted state. "Where no vision is, the people perish." On that wonderful day, when three thousand persons were converted in the city of Jerusalem, the effect was produced by the preached word, particularly from the mouth of Peter. It was the word preached by him, which convinced them of sin, and brought them to repentance. Nor is there reason to believe that those sinners, who did not come under the sound of the word, were thus wrought upon by the Spirit of God. The word of God is quick and powerful ; it discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart. And when placed in the hands of the living teacher, its power is increased. The word of truth in the hand of an accredited ambassador, whose understanding is illuminated, and whose heart is sanctified by its holy doctrines, constitutes the most important instrumentality in accomplishing that glorious object, the conversion of apostate men. But since both the word and its ministry are dependent agencies, there is an infinite disparity between them and the agency of God himself. He is honored in their legitimate use ; but when their influence is placed on a level with that of his own almighty Spirit, he is dishonored. Now he finds it necessary to withdraw his own agency, that he may give demonstrative proof of the powerlessness of all agencies except his own. He suffers his ministers, whom he has made fishers of men, to toil all night (not play, but *toil*,) and yet take nothing, for the sake of preparing them to see and acknowledge their dependence on Him to fill their net. Luke v. 5. John xxi. 3. They decrease, that He may increase. They can baptize with water, but He with the Holy Ghost. After they have preached the gospel without effect, the Holy Ghost is sent down from heaven, and now it becomes the power of God to salvation.

It is a common remark, that *we are always upon extremes*. It seems hard for us to keep on the middle ground, between undervaluing and overrating those means which God makes use of to promote the salva-



tion of men. There are some who hold them all in contempt, and therefore neglect their use ; while others make such dependence on them, especially on means of a certain description, that the necessity of a divine efficiency is forgotten. This often renders it necessary for God to withhold success from such idolized means. In the whole of our salvation, God designs that His hand shall conspicuously appear, and be acknowledged ; not only in furnishing proper means and instruments, but more especially in rendering them successful. Therefore it is, that we are made weak, preparatory to our being made strong. When they were without strength, was the due time for Christ to die for an ungodly world. The diminishing of Gideon's army was necessary to his victory over the enemy. The Lord repents himself for his servants, when he seeth their power is gone. He restores sight to the blind, when they have become convinced they can not see. He heals, when the patient is sensible he is sick and needs healing. If a sinner thinks himself to be alive, the commandment must first come, sin revive, and he see himself morally, and, in the eye of the law, to be nothing better than a dead man, before the way is prepared for him to be raised to spiritual life. 2 Cor. xii. 10. Rom. v. 6. Deut. xxxii. 36. John ix. 41. Matt. ix. 12. Rom. vii. 9. Though revealed truth is made use of to excite an awakened attention, give instruction, and produce conviction, while the mind is in its unrenewed state ; and also to draw forth its first renovated affections, still, as I am inclined to believe, God is wont to give the sinner an experimental knowledge of this fact ; *That all the light contained in his word, if it could be concentrated in one focal point, has not power enough to draw his heart into a compliance with the terms of salvation, unless accompanied by the special and transforming agency of the HOLY GHOST.* Yet when he yields the compliance which was required, he wonders why he did not do it sooner. In view of the reasonableness of the terms, he now wonders he withheld his compliance a moment ; while in view of the obstinacy of his will, he admires the energy of that grace which has prevented him from holding on in his rebellion to the end of his probation.

Although this Article has already been protracted to an unusual length, still I wish, before I proceed to the harmonizing part, to detain the reader a moment longer, by presenting some remarks on a *new theory*, relating to the efficacy of *the inspired word*, or its complete sufficiency to effect the sinner's conversion. There is a sentiment, that is said to be gaining some belief at the present day, the purport of which is to make us believe, that we stand in need of no influence of the Holy Spirit, except that which is *located* or *embodied* in the scriptures. The argument to support the sentiment is, for substance, this : The scriptures contain a complete exhibition of the mind of the Spirit ; and we are perfectly free agents, to choose and act for ourselves. The Spirit, it is said, has inspired these holy writings, and given us full attestation of their truth ; and, having done all that was necessary for him to do, to effect our salvation, has now left it for us to employ our reason to understand, and our voluntary agency to accede to the terms on which salvation is offered us.

I am ready to acknowledge, that our not understanding and acceding to these terms is inexcusable, even in case the Spirit should do no more

to prepare the way for it, than what he has already done. But I am far from believing that he had accomplished all he had to do on the earth, when, having furnished the church with a complete rule of faith and practice, he withheld his miraculous gifts. As to any new revelations of the divine will, his influences are no more required. To expect other similar communications to those of the Bible, exposes us to the curse which we find recorded at the close of the New Testament: "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." Rev. xxii. 18. This work of the Spirit was brought to a close before the end of the first century. But is there no sense in which we may yet look for communications from this Divine Agent? That there is an influence perfectly distinct from that which is inherently lodged in the inspired volume, (though by no means in contrariety to it,) is made evident by such considerations as these:

First. If it were not so, there would be a manifest impropriety in praying for the descent of the Holy Ghost, just as there would be in petitioning that Christ might yet be sent to make an atonement for our sins. As the atonement is already made, so the sacred volume is already filled out. No believer in the Bible makes this one of his petitions, that God would now make a revelation of his will, nor that he would give us a Savior; but every Christian prays that God would send down his Holy Spirit. And Christ has taught him so to pray. See Luke xi. 13. Were the sentiment, however, to become universal, that no influence is to be expected, except what was embodied and located in the Bible; is there not reason to believe that it would effect such a change in our prayers, that petitions for the *descent* of the Spirit would cease? For why should we wish the Third Person in the Godhead to descend, and do over again the work which he has already completed, any more than to wish the Second Person to come and die again for our sins? If we believe that the Spirit of God has already done all which he can consistently do, to effect the conversion of sinners, why do we ask that he might do anything more? Such prayer, I think, must be made merely for the sake of producing an effect on sinners themselves. Why, then, is it not termed *preaching*, rather than prayer? If we have already received all that help from the Spirit of God which we deem necessary to our salvation, why do we ask for additional help? Remember, "God is not mocked."

Secondly. Passages are to be found, where there is a marked difference between the *word* and the *Spirit*. Peter speaks of the ministers of the word as preaching the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. 1 Pet. i. 12. Here we notice, the gospel was one thing, and the influence of the Holy Ghost which accompanied it, was another. Of the first sermon preached to a gentile audience, we have this record in the tenth chapter of Acts: "While Peter yet spake *these words*, the *Holy Ghost* fell on all them that heard the word." The next chapter gives an account of a great moral revolution at Antioch; and it is attributed to these two causes; 1st. *The preaching of the Lord Jesus* by the ministers of his word. 2dly. *The hand of the Lord* that was with them. Who can read the history of the day of Pentecost, given in the second chapter of this book, and not distinguish between the *word* and

the *Spirit*? Then was strikingly verified that declaration of Wisdom, "Behold I will pour out my *Spirit* unto you, I will make known my *words* unto you." Prov. i. 23. Christ, the personal Wisdom of God, by pouring out his *Spirit* makes known his words unto us.

Thirdly. The distinction which I am contending for, and which I deem to be of vital importance to the religion of the gospel, is supported by the representations the scriptures make of *the different ways* by which the word and the *Spirit* are sent to us. The word is represented as sent by human instrumentality, but the *Spirit* as coming immediately from God; the word goes out of Zion, but the *Spirit* comes from heaven: "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion." "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Ps. cx. 2. Isa. ii. 3. But the *Spirit* is not represented to be sent from Jerusalem; but to be sent down from heaven. It is spoken of as "poured upon us from on high." 1 Pet. i. 12. Isa. xxxii. 15. Joel ii. 28.

Fourthly. The word of God, though it is called "the rod of his strength," is represented as being sometimes powerless, and as always needing the *Spirit's* influence to give it effect on the heart, either of sinner or saint. The apostle, with adoring gratitude to God, reminds the church at Thessalonica, that the gospel which had been preached in their city, did not come to them in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost. 1 Thess. i. 2—5. Did he not hereby establish a manifest distinction between the word and the Holy Ghost? This clearly implied, that the word might have come to them without the Holy Ghost; and that in such case it would also have been without power.

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

This Article harmonizes with the two which immediately precede it. Drop this from our series, and the gospel scheme would be utterly deficient. In the first of these two Articles we see salvation freely offered to all; and in the other we are taught, that it is the fixed character of every sinner in the world to reject that offer. Yet we learn from the Bible and from what has transpired, that this offer has been accepted by many of our fallen race. The light which the present Article sheds on our system, reveals the cause of this fact. Here we learn how it came to pass that the son, who at first refused to go and work in his father's vineyard, afterwards repented and went. The new creation of the mind, enables us to account for wonderful phenomena in the moral world. It enables us to see why Saul, the persecutor, should preach the faith he once destroyed; why three thousand on the day of Pentecost believed in that Savior, whom but a few days before they had put to death; and why all the saved should embrace those kind offers, which they once obstinately refused. When God takes away their heart of stone, and gives them a heart of flesh, neither the holiness of the salvation, nor the humiliating terms on which it is offered, form any objection to their cordial acceptance of it. The gospel needs to undergo no change, in order to please that heart which is itself changed into the image of God.



This Article has an evident agreement with the *fifth*; for regeneration is one of the fruits of Christ's death. He died to save his people from their sins; and this is the beginning of salvation from sin. As the atonement procures the blessing of regeneration, so this prepares us to receive the atonement.

There is a manifest agreement between this Article and the *fourth*. That relates to man's apostacy and the total alienation of his heart from God; and had this never taken place, the renovation of our nature had been needless. But because Adam fell, and begat his sons in his own moral likeness; because we are all shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin, it has become indispensably necessary that we should be transformed by the renewing of our mind. If the degree of our depravity were anything less than total, according to the tenor of that Article, there would be no place for the doctrine of this. It is because that which is born of the flesh is nothing but flesh, that no man can enter the kingdom of God, unless he is born from above.

Some may think, that to make this Article harmonize with the *fourth*, it must represent it to be as easy for man to regain a holy character as it was to lose it. In neither of these Articles has man been represented as at all independent of his Maker. Yet, while the scriptures say but little concerning the influential cause of his fall, they say very much about the influence by which he is recovered. Where the scriptures have said but little, it admonishes us to say but little: and where they have said much, it seems proper that we should do the same. While the inspired writings represent the intelligent creation as at all times dependent on God, they speak of a kind of *peculiar* dependence for holiness of character. They reveal to us the doctrine of a *special divine influence*, which produces and preserves, or restores and sustains all the holiness there is in the moral system. Hence it is, that one way in which they account for the entrance, continuance and prevalence of sin, is by the *withdrawment* of this special influence. Of Hezekiah it is said, "God *left* him to try him; that he might know all that was in his heart." This seems to refer to the withdrawment of that special influence of which we speak. Concerning Israel, at a particular time, we hear the Most High saying, "But my people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me: so *I gave them up* unto their own heart's lust, and they walked in their own counsels." Concerning the heathen it is said, God *gave them up* unto vile affections: and that he *suffered* all nations to walk in their own ways. 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. Ps. lxxxi. 11, 12. Rom. i. 26. Acts xiv. 16.

This operation of the Divine Being on created minds, which is often distinguished from his other operations by being called *the influence of the Holy Spirit*, he does not feel himself under obligation, except by some covenanted engagement, to afford; since it is not essential to the preservation of those powers which constitute us free and accountable agents. In our depraved state, we are described as "sensual, having not the Spirit." Jude, ver. 19. And if we are left to ourselves, without the Spirit, we shall continue to be sensual, that is, nothing but natural men. As one proper way of accounting for man's apostacy is by saying, *God left him*—he withheld from him that special influence, by which angels were preserved from falling; so, as a counterpart to this,

it is proper to account for man's regaining the lost image, by saying, God returns to him and restores that special influence. As soon as he restores that influence, he renews that lost image, and man becomes again the friend of God.

Between this and the *third* Article the harmony is easily seen. When God first created man, he set the law before his face, and also put it in his heart. The apostacy, while it did not release him from obligation to obey, took from his heart the spirit of obedience. This it is the province of regeneration to restore; for in this gracious work God writes his law in our hearts. If his redeemed people did not become heartily subject to the law, there would be an entire discord between the law and the gospel. But no such discord appears; for though they are not saved by the strength of the law, they yield an unfeigned subjection to all its holy requirements.

Between this and the first *two* Articles the harmony is very manifest. The *first* of the two exhibits an Agent, great and good enough to transform a wretched sinner into a happy saint; and the *second* shows us that he has entered on such a system of operations, as would insure the most perfect and durable display of his infinitely great and holy attributes. And what can be calculated to make a display more attractive and glorious than the gracious work contemplated by this Article. In regeneration God operates upon a moral chaos; and of materials, which the fall had ruined, brings forth a new and beautiful creation, which will be forever to the praise of the glory of his grace.

#### REMARKS.

1. The doctrine exhibited in this Article furnishes one reason for believing, that the book which reveals it is, in distinction from all others which make this claim, the inspired word of God. Without this doctrine there can be no religious system adapted to the exigencies of an apostate world. All those systems of ethics and religious observances, which leave the heart unchanged, are nothing better than the cleansing of the outside of the filthy cup and platter, and the white-washing of sepulchres, which are inwardly full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness. A renovation of heart is, I believe, a doctrine peculiar to the religion of the Bible. Here it is taught, made plain, and much insisted on: and is not this circumstance enough to convince us, that the Bible emanated from Him who was acquainted with man's depraved state, and knew what he needed to prepare him for an eternal communion with himself?

2. Those of the children of Adam who have been recovered from the ruins of the fall by regenerating grace, are highly favored ones. The change which they have experienced, is of all others the most desirable and merciful. Before it was experienced, they had the image of the worst being in the universe; but now, of the best. An elevation from a dunghill to a throne, is not to be compared with a translation from nature to grace. Well may it be said,

"His noblest wonders here we view,  
In souls renewed and sins forgiven."

3. If regeneration is a change of such importance, they who have felt its purifying influence, will desire the same may be experienced by their fellow sinners. Unless they shall be born into the kingdom of Christ, it had been good for them if they had not been born into the world. If there is anything we can do, the tendency of which will be to promote the conversion of men from sin to holiness, certainly we ought to do it; for there is no other way in which we can do them so much good. "He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." In view of the great desirableness of the conversion of a sinner, and of being instrumental in its accomplishment, it may be well said, "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." It is now brought to my recollection, that while I was anticipating an entrance on this good work, no one circumstance made it appear more desirable to me than this; that it would furnish a favorable opportunity of telling my fellow sinners, *they must be born again*. So important and indispensably requisite did this change then appear, I thought if I could so speak as to make a world of sinful men hear me, I would, in conformity to the teaching of my Savior, tell them all, that without an experimental acquaintance with the new birth, they could not, they must not think of seeing the kingdom of God. At that time, the thought had not entered my mind, that I might be permitted one day to make this communication to them, not from the pulpit only, but also from the press. But since my Master has favored me with such a way of getting access to some (I know not how many) of my lost brethren, I gladly improve it to say to them, Turn your attention to this deeply interesting subject. The second birth, effected by the power of the Holy Ghost, is no chimaera. That you may be washed in the laver of regeneration is your greatest privilege. Without it, you must be unlovely and unhappy during all your immortal existence. To expect an admission into a heaven of holiness, without a radical change, is the vainest thing imaginable. And now, if ever, it must be experienced.

4. From the attention we have paid to this doctrine we perceive, that in seeking the recovery of our fellow men from sin to holiness, we have two classes of duties to perform. In the one we labor with *them*, and in the other with *God*, in their behalf. There are means to be used to bring men to repentance; but without divine efficiency they will prove ineffectual. The sword of the Spirit will do execution in no other hand but his own. With the means of grace we go to the unregenerate themselves: but to obtain that efficacy which is necessary to render these means successful, we must go to Him who has the residue of the Spirit. Let the light of our example, and the light of instruction, shine with clearness upon those who still remain in the darkness of unregeneracy; and let the throne of grace be addressed in their behalf day and night, and then shall we be in the use of the most scriptural measures, to effect their translation from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

5. In closing these remarks, I feel constrained to notice two different and apparently opposite conceptions that natural men form of their unregenerate state, which to me seem equally to hinder their conversion. The one is, that their native depravity is like some bodily



weakness or natural defect, which furnishes them with an excuse, and releases them from obligation to attempt obedience to such commands as require them to make a new heart and a new spirit, repenting of sin and believing in Christ. This misconception of the nature of their depravity, tends to prevent that conviction of guilt and those personal efforts, which, in the economy of grace, are made necessary either to precede or accompany the renewing of the mind.

The other conception to which I referred, as a contrast to this, is a false conceit of self-sufficiency, or a reliance on innate strength, independent of the Spirit's assistance. Because they are voluntary agents, they conclude they need no foreign aid to enable them to comply with the injunctions, requiring them to make a new heart, to repent and believe. Now *he that*, for the performance of these or any other duties, *trusteth to his own heart, is a fool*. Our obligation to act, and our obligation to depend on God, co-exist. When Peter said to the lame man who sat at the Beautiful gate of the temple, "Rise up and walk," it behooved him immediately to make the attempt to do what he had never yet done: but it also behooved him to make this attempt as a creature, absolutely dependent on God; and in the present case dependent for supernatural strength. I know that the inability of the impotent man consisted in a want of physical strength, and was therefore entirely innocent. In this respect the sinner's case is altogether different; since his need of a special divine interposition arises from a guilty cause. But though the cause of the necessity in this case is quite different, the necessity is no less real; and it is proper it should be known in the one case as much as in the other. I do not see why it has a legitimate tendency to prevent the morally, any more than the naturally impotent, from attempting to rise up and walk, to be told that they need immediate help from God to render their attempt successful. They who have had the longest experience in things of this nature have found, when their sense of dependence on God has been the most clear and vivid, their attempts to comply with his requirements have proved most successful; and that the greatest benefit which they have derived from their unsuccessful efforts, has been to divest them of self-sufficiency, and to lead them to a more entire dependence on God for *strength*, as well as righteousness. Why, then, shall we not apprise the sinner of this dependence at his outset? Show him his duty, and let him know it must be complied with, or he is lost forever. Show him, also, that through a blamable cause, namely, his hatred of a holy God and a holy salvation, he needs the *special* agency of the Holy Spirit, to dispose and incline his heart to the requisite compliance.

Suffer me to crowd home this subject upon the mind of every unrenewed person who shall read this Article. It is clearly your duty to cease to do evil, and learn to do well—to make you a new heart and a new spirit—to begin forthwith to love that God, who has always been worthy of your supreme regard. Trifle no longer, for your case is extremely critical. Something must be done, and done soon, or your ruin is inevitable. Nothing will render you at all acceptable to God, or meet for his kingdom, short of a renewed heart. This you must have, or never see light. And I would add, you must have the aid of the Holy Spirit, or it is certain you will never have a renewed heart. Your

circumstances, therefore, seem to require, that in our address to you we should combine those two apparently opposite injunctions, "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord!"—"Go forward!"

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## ARTICLE IX.

THE CHANGE EFFECTED BY REGENERATION IS A DISPLAY OF DIVINE GRACE, WHICH IS BOTH SPECIAL AND SOVEREIGN.

THAT regeneration is a *divine* work, has already been shown. God is the efficient cause of that change of character which is its result. Further proof of this point, I trust, is not necessary. Under this Article, three things will engage attention. 1. It will be shown, that this work is *gracious*. 2. That the grace is *special*. 3. That it is *sovereign*.

1. Regeneration is a *gracious* change. Every favor is not properly denominated *grace*. It is a favor to a creditor to receive his debt; but there is no grace in such a favor. Grace is a *gift*; which supposes it to be a thing that could not be justly claimed. In the most appropriate sense, grace is favor conferred on the *ill-deserving*. Alms bestowed on the honest poor, may be termed grace; but favors conferred on those from whom we have received unprovoked injuries, is what the word more properly imports. It is in this highest sense, that regeneration is called grace.

But is it in reality any favor to a sinner to be renewed in the spirit of his mind? Certainly it is, and one of the first magnitude. The change effected by regeneration may be said, without hyperbole, to be *infinitely* desirable. We have souls which will not only exist forever, but which will be always enlarging in their capacity for happiness or misery. The soul of man will exist, and expand without end, let its character be what it may. While unrecovered by regeneration, the soul is unholy and vile. So it appears in the sight of God and of all other good beings; and even the sinner remaining impenitent is capable of a humiliating conviction of his own vileness. What can be more dreadful than for an immortal creature, possessed of ever-growing faculties, to remain depraved to all eternity; to be at enmity with the blessed God and all his friends; to know that he is abhorred by every benevolent being in the universe; and to be conscious that he merits all this shame and contempt!

In this vile character regeneration effects a change—a change which, both in its nature and results, is desirable beyond all others. Nothing can be more hateful than the carnal, or more lovely than the renewed mind. The one bears the image of the devil, the other the image of God. Though the *renovated nature* does not at first possess a complete dominion in the soul, it has the promise of ultimately reigning

without a rival. Regeneration makes such an essential alteration in the sinner's character, that it unfits him for the company of devils, and prepares him for the society of angels; and every soul that experiences this change is thereby rescued from the lowest hell and raised to the highest heaven. What favor can a sinner receive from God worthy to be compared with this! They who have not been regenerated, are spoken of in the scriptures as *not having obtained mercy*, however multiplied may have been the favors bestowed upon them. 1 Pet. ii. 10. To have a new heart is, in the most emphatic sense, to *obtain mercy*. Such as have it are, in the language of Paul, "partakers of *the benefit*." 1 Tim. vi. 2.

The renewal of the mind being the greatest possible good, and a favor conferred on the ill-deserving, it must be *grace* in the highest sense of the word. Had we not been ill-deserving, a favor of this kind could never have been conferred on us. No creature whose heart is not depraved can receive the mercy of regeneration; since the transformation of a depraved heart is the very thing which it means. The favor of a literal resurrection can be experienced by none but the dead; and of a spiritual resurrection, by none except such as are dead in sins; and they who are dead in sins deserve no good at the hand of their Maker. Well, then, might the apostle tell those who had been quickened and raised up from this death, that it was by grace they were saved. Eph. ii. 5.

2. The grace displayed in regeneration is *special*. It is a favor which differs entirely from all other favors previously granted to its recipients, and is peculiar to them who are saved. Other men may have the word of God, the offers of salvation, and the convincing influences of the Spirit; but they never receive the grace of regeneration. Whatever God does for other men, this is certain, he does not renew their hearts; for if he did this, it could not fail to place them among the regenerated. Can anything be more absurd than to assert, that it is *God* who renews the sinner's heart; and yet say, he does nothing more for the sinner who is renewed than for those who remain unrenewed? The question which is put by the apostle to a Corinthian believer, "Who maketh thee to differ from another?" manifestly implies, that in every instance where we enjoy a favorable distinction from others, we are bound to give the glory of it to God. And can we for a moment indulge the thought, that God is not to be acknowledged as the cause of this most merciful of all distinctions? I believe there is no favor received from the hand of God, which the scriptures consider as more special and discriminating than this.

If we are desirous of knowing what God has communicated on this subject, let us prayerfully consider these passages from his holy word which will now be introduced. Regeneration is represented as a special favor, in Rom. ix. 16: "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." *Willing* and *running* comprehend the religion of the *heart* and of the *life*; in both of which the convert is active. When, therefore, it is said, it is not of *him*, it must mean (if it mean anything,) that *God* has effected the change; and that the influence which he has exerted in causing him to will and run, is a peculiar mercy.



I would next refer to the second chapter of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians. He reminds the saints at Ephesus that they were once dead in trespasses and sins; that they walked according to the course of this world, and were by nature the children of wrath even as others; and that for the very desirable change of character, whereby they were made to differ from their fellow sinners, they were indebted to the grace of God, which had been displayed in quickening them, even when they were dead in sins. Between natural and spiritual death there is a perfect difference, as far as criminality is concerned; (for spiritual death is nothing better than voluntary rebellion;) but what the apostle here says on the subject of their resurrection from a death of sin to a life of holiness, is adapted to impress our minds with this sentiment; That if the inhabitants of Ephesus had all been literally dead, and those to whom he wrote had been the only ones raised to life, the favor would have been no more distinguishing than in the present case.

In the third chapter of Titus the apostle seeks to impress his own mind, and the minds of his brethren in Christ, with the *greatness* and *speciality* of the favor they had received, in being made the subjects of regeneration: "For we ourselves also," said he, "were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior." In this passage we are taught, (1.) That the regenerated and their fellow men are originally alike in depravity and hatefulness. (2.) That the change which the regenerated have experienced is not to be attributed to any good works they did before it was wrought. (3.) The change is ascribed to the renovating power of the Holy Ghost; and this is said to be the fruit of divine mercy, through Jesus Christ.

That regenerating grace is special, seems to be clearly taught in that well known passage, John vi. 44, "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." Here we are taught two things, 1st, That no man comes to the Son, except he is drawn to him by the Father. 2dly, That no man who is thus drawn by the Father ever fails of coming to the Son. Hence we conclude, that those who come to the Son experience a special mercy, one that is *peculiar* to themselves. I know it is said by some, that all men are drawn by the Father, though but a smaller part of them ever come to the Son. To me it appears entirely clear, that the passage now before us teaches a different sentiment. Let the following things be considered, and I think the same will be clear to every one. *First*. Sinners lie under no inability to come to the Son, previous to the drawing of the Father, except that which consists in rebellion and unwillingness to submit to the terms of a holy salvation. If the drawing of the Father meant anything short of an influence to remove the obstinacy of the will, the Savior would never have said, "No man can come to me except the Father draw him," for, in every other sense, except as we are prevented by the obstinacy of our

will, we are able at all times to come to the Son. And if the drawing of the Father consists in effectually counteracting the sinner's rebellious will, then it must invariably result in his coming to Christ. Secondly. It is here clearly taught, that every sinner whom the Father draws to the Son is *saved*. But if he were not so drawn by the Father as actually to come to the Son, it would not entitle him to the blessings of salvation. The certainty of *his* salvation, whom the Father draws, is taught in the concluding clause; "and I will raise him up at the last day." Whom did Christ declare he would raise up at the last day? The answer is manifest, Every man whom the Father should draw to him. I do not see what else could be his meaning. The promise, "I will raise him up at the last day," was a declaration, in few words, of his purpose to save, even unto the uttermost, every sinner whom the Father should draw to him; since a blessed resurrection at the last day, is to the gospel salvation its *finishing* stroke. See verses 39, 40, and 1 Cor. xv. 26. Thirdly. That no sinners are *drawn* to the Son, except those who *come* to him and partake of his salvation, is rendered very evident by the quotation the Savior made from the prophets, to corroborate what he had said: "It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me." To make this quotation at all pertinent, it is necessary to understand the phrases "drawn of the Father," and "taught of God," to import the same thing. In the quoted passage we perceive, that the divine teaching spoken of, is in every instance effectual: *Every man* that hath heard and learned of the Father, says Christ, cometh unto me. This, in its connexion, is the same as to say, Every man that is drawn of the Father, cometh unto me.

I do not see how this passage can fairly be explained, without its establishing the doctrine of *special* grace. Does it not manifestly declare, that they who have come to Christ, have had a divine drawing and teaching peculiar to themselves; and that this is the very reason why they, in distinction from others, have come to him?

It may be thought by some, that there is another declaration of the Savior, which authorizes them to reject the interpretation now given to this passage. On a certain occasion he said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." John xii. 32. In this text he undoubtedly foretels what would be the happy result of his crucifixion, viz. the conversion of the world to the Christian faith. "All men" means all nations, or mankind in general, and the *drawing* promised is that which is effectual; but the time when the promise shall be fully verified is not yet arrived. In the Millennium, he will show us what he meant by his drawing all men unto him.

The scriptures speak of a *call* which is special, being entirely restricted to them that are saved. To such a call the apostle has reference when he says, "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them that are *called*, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. According to the phraseology of this text, to be preached to, and to be called, are not the same thing. To the uncalled among the Jews and Greeks, the crucified Savior,

whom the apostles preached, was either a stumbling-block, or foolishness; but to *all* them who were *called*, of both nations, he was the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. In the eighth chapter of Romans, the number of called is made to equal the number of the justified: "And whom he called, them he also justified." It is true that the scriptures speak of a call that has no restrictions. "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is unto the sons of men." This call does not always prove successful: "Because I have *called* and ye have *refused*." Prov. viii. 4, and i. 24. But that call which makes Christ precious to the soul, even the power and wisdom of God, and which brings the subject of it into a state of justification, is never rejected; for it consists in turning the heart to God, and disposing it to accept proffered mercy. This has very properly been distinguished from those invitations and strivings which are common to men in general, by being termed an *effectual call*. If the difference between the two consisted merely in this, that the successful call was somewhat more pressing than the other, it would have been entirely unnatural to represent it to be as much the exclusive privilege of those who love God, to be *called*, as to be justified. It is a privilege to have the God of grace call to us; but how distinguished is the mercy which they have received, who have been made to hear his voice, and have been called *out* of darkness into marvellous light. Surely it becometh them to show forth the praises of Him, who has thus distinguished them by his richest grace. 1 Pet. ii. 9.\*

As illustrating the nature of special grace, I would refer to this passage: "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." Matt. xiii. 11. Here Christ informs his disciples of a favor that was granted to *them*, which was not given to men in general. What was it? Not the object or means of knowledge; but an *understanding heart*. To them it was given to know; but to others it was not given. This peculiar knowledge was not science; no, not even that which relates to theology. It was spiritual illumination, a knowledge peculiar to the renovated. This most precious and desirable knowledge may be great, where other knowledge is small.

Is not the speciality of divine grace clearly taught by Christ, when he says, "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Matt. xi. 27. Who will pretend, according to the sense of this passage, that the Son reveals the Father to all men; or even to a single individual who still remains destitute of a saving knowledge of him?

3. Regenerating grace is not only special, but it is also an act of *sovereignty*. By this we mean, that God, as the HOLY SOVEREIGN of the universe, dispenses it according to his own pleasure. In the exercise of government, there are some things which are managed by no prescribed rule, but are left to the discretion of the executive. In a

\* The word *call* is most commonly used in the scriptures in the *effectual* sense. See Acts ii. 39. Rom. i. 1, 6, 7. 1 Cor. i. 1, 2, 9, 24, 26; vii. 18—24. Gal. i. 15. Eph. iv. 4. Col. iii. 15. 1 Tim. vi. 12. 2 Tim. i. 9. Heb. ix. 15. 1 Pet. v. 10. 2 Pet. i. 3. Jude, verse 1. Rev. xvii. 14; xix. 9.



monarchy they are of course entrusted with the sovereign. Of this class, one of the most important is that which relates to the dispensing of *pardons*. In the execution of the *laws* there is no place for this kind of sovereignty, even in a monarchical government; for the laws must be the rule to regulate the conduct of the sovereign, as much as that of his subjects. The Divine Ruler exercises none of his special sovereignty, in rewarding the obedient and punishing the guilty: but when he bestows favor on the transgressors of his law, it is not only the grace of a sovereign, but is *sovereign* grace. Let it, however, be remembered, that the sovereignty of God, even in the dispensation of his grace, has nothing in it that is unwise or capricious. In determining whether any pardons should be dispensed among his rebellious subjects; and, if any, how great a number, and to what individuals, he never loses sight of the display of his glory, and the promotion of the interests of his moral kingdom. Of this he has given us the most striking proof, in the atonement which he provided to secure the honor of the law, before he would consent to remit the execution of the penalty in a single instance. Another way in which he gives us evidence of this is, by his never extending pardons to any but such as are prepared for them by unfeigned repentance and submission to the terms of grace.

To dispense pardons to the penitent, in distinction from the dispensing of rewards to the innocent and punishment to the guilty, comes under the head of divine sovereignty; and yet the bestowment of the grace of *regeneration* is an act of sovereignty in a higher sense still. God has made promise to all the sinners in this apostate world, that he will forgive them if they repent; and that if they believe in his Son Jesus Christ they shall be saved. It is not, therefore, concerning sinners of this class, that he claims a right to display his sovereignty, in being gracious to whom he will be gracious. He promises to be gracious to all such sinners, without a single exception. Though the favor conferred is unmerited; still, since it is promised, neither his faithfulness nor justice will suffer him to withhold it. See 1 John, i. 9. But the unregenerate are not only without merit; they are also destitute of that penitent and believing heart to which the promises of the gospel are made. There is not one among them all that possesses a single trait of character, to bring him within the compass of the promises. They may have kept themselves (or rather have been kept,) from that sin which is unpardonable—also from drunkenness, debauchery, habitual lying, and other vices, which would have given a peculiarly hopeless aspect to their case; still there is not one of them that has complied with a single requisition, on which the divine favor is suspended. Nor is there, in the sight of God, the least approximation towards a spirit of reconciliation. He puts forth his power to subdue the sinner's rebellious will, at the time when his rebellion is at the highest pitch.

Before the exertion of the new creating power, which God displays in transforming the heart of the sinner, he alarms his fears and awakes him from his slumbers. Now the law is made to enter, that the offense might abound; the commandment comes, and sin revives. During this very solemn and interesting portion of the sinner's unre-

generate life (whether it be short or protracted,) he is nothing bettered as to the state of his heart, but is more rapidly than ever before actually growing worse. When I say he is growing worse, I do not refer to the exterior of his conduct, which may be much improved. And by the influence of such hopes and fears as are perfectly selfish, he may be prevented from driving away serious reflections, and from quenching the Spirit in that aggravated sense in which it is sometimes done: but in no sense does even the awakened sinner surrender his *heart* to God. This strong hold of his rebellion he is still fortifying. Into this, as into their citadel, his external sins seem to have retreated, as if to concentrate their force to resist divine government. It now becomes manifest by actual experiment, as well as by divine testimony, that the heart is *desperately* wicked, and will never submit, unless conquered by superior strength. Just at this interesting crisis the grace of regeneration is given. And how could the pure sovereignty of the gift be more remarkably displayed? A blessing is bestowed which is infinite—unmerited—unpromised. God had before this made rich provision for the salvation of guilty men, and proffered pardon to such as would return. The convicted sinner, after examining the state of the controversy between himself and his Maker, and the terms of reconciliation, refused to become reconciled on such terms, and was about to lose the proffered blessing forever. Here divine mercy interposes, and does that for him to which he has no claim in any way, either by merit or by promise; a heart is *given* him to accept that which he had before wickedly refused, and which he would have continued to refuse, had it not been for this merciful interposition.

Well might the apostle say to men who had been recovered from this hateful, yet voluntary bondage, "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast: for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Eph. ii. 8—10. How expressly does he exclude every unregenerate doing and feeling from having any influence in procuring the change, when he tells us that every thing in us, having the nature of goodness, is subsequent to the new creation; and is its effect, not its cause. If sinners, to the very last moment of their unregeneracy, are what the apostle supposed them to be, entirely depraved and rebellious, God can be under no obligation to them. They lie at the disposal of his sovereign pleasure. He has explicitly informed them, that on their acceding to the gracious proposals he makes, he will forgive their sins: but so long as they do not accede, he is under no obligation to them. At this juncture, all their hope must be derived from the disclosures he has made of his benevolent feelings towards his enemies in general, and his readiness to impart to them, when the interests of the universe will not be injured by it, that grace which will produce in them a willingness to accede to the terms of reconciliation.

God does not make a revelation to any individual among the unregenerate, that it is his intention to effect a change in *his* heart in particular: but he makes known his intention to do such a work among those of his character. This he does when he says, "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.—One

shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob." Isa. xlv. 3—5. Again, "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh." But all this, he would have them to understand, is a display of rich sovereign grace. "Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel." Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 32.

Sovereignty, in relation to this subject, implies not only God's right to withhold regenerating grace at his pleasure, but also his right, and his *ability*, to bestow it on whom he pleases. His own declaration is, "I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." Ex. xxxiii. 19. He does not ask permission of his other subjects, nor of the rebel himself, whether he may show mercy to him. When he was about to show mercy to Saul of Tarsus, in transforming him into the divine image, he did not ask leave of good or evil angels, of good or evil men, nor of Saul himself; but according to his own good pleasure he transformed this most violent persecutor into the chiefest of the apostles, that he might make him a striking monument of his rich grace. It is true that the apostle tells us, he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. But what prevented his disobedience to it? It was manifestly the power of renewing grace. God is the Potter, and we are the clay—the marred clay in his hand; and when any one undergoes a renovation of mind, he is made another vessel, as it seemeth good to the Potter to make it. Jer. xviii. 4. God not only raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, but *he quickeneth whom he will*. His declaration is, "I will work, and who shall let it?" And again, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" John v. 21. Isa. xliii. 13. Gen. xviii. 14.

It will not be disputed, that to human view some sinners are less likely to receive the grace of regeneration than others. They who have resisted all the influence of a religious education, and have held on in their course of wickedness until old age, exhibit peculiarly affecting indications of final reprobation; and yet some even of this class are saved. Manasseh, the son and successor of the good Hezekiah, is a striking example of this sort. He filled up the greater part of a long life in a course of high-handed rebellion against the God of his father; and yet he did not die until sovereign grace had transformed his heart. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 1—13. What class of sinners appear more hopeless than felons, those wicked men who, by their crimes against human society, have forfeited their life or their liberty; and yet some even of this class become stars in the crown of the Redeemer. When from the cross he went to Paradise, he took with him a felon, who expressed no repentance for all his crimes, until the very last sands in his glass were running. When his ill-improved probation was just closing, mercy interposed, and the brand was plucked out of the fire.

Were the *majority* of the saved to be taken from these classes of sinners, its influence on the cause of morals would be unfavorable; but some cases of this kind have a very happy effect; since they clearly show salvation to be of grace—free, sovereign, and invincible. Such striking instances are well adapted to excite our confidence in God, as having power sufficient to transform the hearts of the most obstinate



among his foes; and grace enough to do it, whenever the welfare of the moral system presents no obstacle in his way.

The doctrine, which is the subject of this Article, is not of human origin, but is clearly taught in the word of God. We do not pretend that the scriptures furnish every term we make use of in explaining it. God is not in the scriptures called a *Sovereign*; but he is called "a King," "the great King," "the only Potentate," "the Majesty on high;" and these words are synonymous with *Sovereign*. God is king over all the earth, and in this character it is that we hear him say concerning his revolted subjects, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Mercy bestowed or withheld according to the pleasure of the sovereign, is *sovereign* mercy. And concerning the Supreme King it is said, in relation to the transformation of the human character, "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." God is represented as willing (i. e. choosing) to make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, while he shows his wrath and makes his power known on the vessels of wrath which are fitted to destruction. Rom. ix. 18—23. The saving discoveries of his divine glory he hides from the wise and prudent, and reveals them unto babes: and this he does because it seems *good in his sight*. All men are by nature ignorant of God. Through the blindness of their heart, they can not see the beauty of his moral perfection. This blindness he either removes, or suffers it to remain, according to his wise and holy pleasure. It is an indubitable fact, that some of the children of men, in distinction from others, are born of God. And how can they who experience this great mercy account for it any more consistently than by saying, with the apostle, "*Of his own will* begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures?"

There seems to be much in the scriptures to support the doctrine of distinguishing grace, dispensed at the sovereign pleasure of the Supreme King: and what is there to contravene it?

Some imagine our doctrine is set aside by such general invitations and encouragements as these: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Such general invitations, however, do not militate at all against our doctrine. Special grace does not stand opposed to a general offer; nor does it give the least uncertainty to the salvation of any of those who accept that offer. It is not a prerogative which is claimed, even by divine sovereignty, to make any discriminations between those sinners who accept the gospel invitation.

But do not the scriptures tell us that God is no *respector of persons*? They do. Peter, when he had arrived at the house of a gentile convert, said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." Acts x. 34. This, with its kindred texts, is, I believe, made a principal weapon in opposing the doctrine of the present Article. But what led Peter to perceive that God was no respecter of persons? Was it because he saw that he had never done anything more for the Jews than for the gentiles? Does not Paul, in answer to the question, "What advantage hath the Jew?" say, "Much every way?" Does

not David say, "He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and judgments unto Israel: *he hath not dealt so with any nation?*" And does not God himself say, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth?" If doing more for one portion of the human race than for another, subjects to this imputation, then the apostle, the psalmist, and God himself, all unite to establish the point, that He is a respecter of persons. If the conferring of a favor on one individual, by passing over others equally in need, be called a respecting of persons, then Christ preached in its favor in his sermon at Nazareth. Luke iv. 25—27. But by recurring to the passage in which Peter declares his conviction that God was no respecter of persons, we find the thing that produced such conviction, was this: he perceived that in every nation, the man who feared God and wrought righteousness, was accepted of him. He saw that *character* was the thing which God respected, and not the *person*; so that neither gentilism nor uncircumcision was any bar to the acceptance of the sincere worshiper. In approving or disapproving of men, accepting or rejecting their services, their character and that of their services, is the only thing which is taken into the account. Their *persons* are not thought of; whether they be Jews or gentiles, white or black, learned or ignorant, rich or poor. None of these things will be at all considered, in making the division between those who will stand on the right and those who will stand on the left hand of the Judge at the last day; and this will constitute the highest possible proof that God is no respecter of persons.

I can see nothing in the words of Peter repugnant to the doctrine of distinguishing grace, nothing which intimates that it would be wrong for God to give greater privileges to some than to others; or that it would be a blot on his holy character, were he to incline the hearts of some to improve their privileges, while others are left to wonder and perish. The words of Peter have no reference to the grace of God, by which the characters of men are transformed, but to his acceptance of them after the transformation has been effected.\*

Some may say, "The discouraging nature of this doctrine leads us to doubt whether it can be true; and if true, whether it should be exhibited." But why should it be thought a *discouraging* doctrine? Does it stand in the door-way, to keep out the invited guests who are pressing to the marriage supper? By no means. This is not the character of the doctrine. Never did it throw a straw in the way of such a guest. Sovereignty does not stand in the door to hinder those who are entering; or to determine which of the willing guests shall be admitted to the table; it rather goes out into the highways to compel *them* to come in, who were passing by Mercy's door, refusing her kind invitations to a feast of love. Here sovereignty makes such discriminations as are dictated by infinite wisdom; in consequence of which a

\* *Respecting, regarding, and accepting of persons*, are scriptural phrases of the same import. They always, whether applied to God or men, imply the judging and treating of persons according to their personal and circumstantial distinctions, rather than according to their characters; but they do not appear to be designed to give the least intimation that God can not effect a change in the heart of any sinner at his pleasure, without its laying him under obligation to do the same for every other sinner. See 2 Chron. xix. 7. Prov. xxiv. 23. Rom. ii. 11. Eph. vi. 9. 1 Pet. i. 17. Matt. xxii. 16. Deut. x. 17. Job xiii. 10; xxxii. 21; xxxiv. 19. Prov. xviii. 5. Luke xx. 21.

multitude of wretched sinners will come to the feast, whom mere invitations would never have influenced to come. And is such a doctrine discouraging? Let a man once be convinced that the carnal mind is the very mind which he himself possesses, and he will cease to view the sovereignty of grace as presenting an obstacle in the way of his salvation.

As a knowledge of the miraculous power of Christ, gave the man who had the withered hand encouragement to make the attempt to stretch it forth, when he had received a command to do it, so will a knowledge of the sovereignty of divine grace, be made use of by the Holy Spirit, to prevent the deeply convicted sinner from falling into a state of despair; and to prevent his entire neglect of those means which, in the hand of God, are of great importance to his salvation. This allusion to the case of the withered hand, I trust, will lead no one to suppose I design to represent the sinner's impotence to be of a similar nature; so as to furnish the least excuse for his spiritual inactivity. As to the nature of the impotence in the two cases, there is an entire difference, one being involuntary and the other voluntary; therefore, while one is innocent, the other is criminal. But in the two cases there are points of resemblance which are worthy to be noticed. 1. In both cases, while the impotence remains, they are required to act in obedience to the will of God. 2. In each case, the only hope that such acting will be the result of the requirement, is made to depend on the interposition of divine power. 3. It will also apply to both cases, that the only way it can be known that this divine power has interposed, is by an actual obedience to the command. In neither case, therefore, is there any room for saying, that all creature effort is useless. That which is *self-sufficient* is discouraged in both cases; since the power to cause successful effort is of God. The man who had the withered hand was required immediately to stretch it forth; but this very requirement evidently implied his obligation to depend on the power of Christ to enable him to do it: and though the sinner is required to make himself a new heart, that is, to put forth new and holy affections, without waiting to know whether he shall receive power from on high to prepare him to do it, he is at the same time manifestly under obligation to make his first, as well as every subsequent effort, in dependence on God to render it successful. See Mark iii. 1—5.

The history of divine grace, as far as it is given in the word of God, (and I might add, in all the records of the church,) coincides with what has been said concerning the sovereignty displayed in its bestowment. Divine grace, through a Saviour's righteousness, commenced its reign in the family of Adam. Cain and Abel were brothers; both born after the moral likeness of their apostate parents. Until Abel was made a subject of regeneration, he must have been as entirely depraved as his brother. How special and sovereign was the grace, which prepared him to offer unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain. Esau and Jacob were not only brothers, but twins; yet Jacob was loved and Esau hated. God displayed the sovereignty of his grace in the difference which he made between these two brothers personally; and still more in the difference he made between their respective descendants; both as to the privileges and character that they possessed. What,



but the special grace of God, made the Jews for so many generations to differ from the idolatrous gentiles?

I have already alluded to the case of the penitent thief. This man, for aught that appears, was as deeply involved in guilt as his comrade who hung suspended on the other side of the cross of Christ. They were both *malefactors*; they were both *thieves*; and, as it appears by the united testimony of two evangelists, they were both *revilers* of the blessed Jesus. One, however, of these vile men repented and was pardoned, just before the mouth of the bottomless pit had closed upon him. But he would not have repented, if he had not been created anew by the power of God. This was an act of rich grace; it was manifestly free, discriminating, and sovereign.

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

The present Article is manifestly in harmony with the one which immediately precedes it. Under that Article we saw that regeneration is a moral change of a radical nature, wrought by the mighty agency of God's holy Spirit, in the hearts of creatures altogether unlovely and ill-deserving. Surely no one who sees the correctness of that representation of the regenerating change, can oppose the doctrine of the present Article.

If we place the present Article beside the *sixth* and *seventh*, no disagreement can be seen. The sixth shows that we have liberty to offer the blessings of salvation to all such as will accede to the terms on which it is offered. Were men willing of themselves to accept this offer (as they generally are to accept advantageous offers in relation to earthly good) there would be no room for the exercise of special and sovereign grace, except in determining for what rebels an atonement should be provided, and, among such as should have the provision made for them, who should be favored with the joyful news. But under the seventh Article we were presented with the most appalling proof of the fact, that all men, in their natural state, are disposed obstinately and perseveringly to reject the terms on which the offer of salvation is made them. Here then there is not only room, but absolute necessity for the exercise of special, sovereign grace, even among those for whom the provision is made, and to whom the word of this salvation is sent.

This Article does not disagree with the *fifth*. The atonement, though infinite, does not of itself remove sin from any heart. It gives the unregenerate no claim upon God to save one of them; but it prepares the way for a consistent exercise of his grace in recovering to holiness and blessedness any sinner of the human race, whose salvation will do more, than his deserved punishment, to glorify his great name and promote the schemes of his benevolence.

If the *fourth* Article is correct; if men are rebels, entire and voluntary rebels against the government of God, they can merit nothing but his displeasure. If he has favors to bestow on creatures of our character, he must surely have an undoubted right to bestow them according to his own good pleasure. When we take a view of the fourth Article

in connection with the *third*, it makes the doctrine of discriminating grace appear consistent and glorious. By transgression we have become obnoxious to the curse of the law, even that law which is holy, just, and good. And the curse of this law is nothing less than eternal death. The sinning angels are under this dreadful curse. He who is inflicting this punishment on them, would be just were he to inflict it on us. As he could be under no obligation, in point of justice, to provide a way of escape from a deserved punishment, he can be under none to interpose and effectually prevent us from rejecting it; as we are obstinately inclined to do.

The present Article is in harmony with the *first* and *second* of our series. In those two Articles we were led to contemplate the being and perfections of God; also his works of creation and providence, by which he designs to make the best display of his infinite glory. And the doctrine of sovereign grace in renewing the hearts of men, is peculiarly full of God and his glory. It is in reference to the new creation that he says, "This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise." I know there are some who, from an apparent regard to the character of the Holy One, conceal his sovereignty in the exercise of his grace. But that he feels himself under no obligation to such friends, for being so tender of his character, may be inferred from the answer which he gave to Moses' request, to be shown his glory. From this answer we learn, that he himself considers his grace, even that which is special and sovereign, not only to consist with his glory, but to be pre-eminently that display of it which proves him to be rich in goodness. Ex. xxxiii. 18, 19.

#### REMARKS.

1. We are led to remark on the importance of distinguishing between God's *benevolence* and *grace*: while the one must be unlimited, the other may be restricted. His benevolence extends to all his creatures, whether they need his grace or not; and to all such as need his grace, whether they become actual recipients of it or not. Though the holiness of God makes it necessary that his good will should extend to all his guilty creatures, fallen angels as well as fallen men, still it leaves him at full liberty to be *gracious to whom he will be gracious*. Justice is one display of benevolence, and grace is another: therefore punishment is inflicted, or pardon dispensed, according to the bearing which it is seen each will have on the interests of the moral system. "The Lord is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." The displays of his grace would be as universal as the exercise of his benevolence, were it not the tendency of such a general display of grace to relax the reins of righteous government, and eclipse the glory of the Supreme King. Is it not easy to see, in case an atonement had been provided for all apostates; or, in case all for whom such a provision is made, were to have their salvation secured by it, that such an extensive system of grace would have a tendency to excite doubts concerning either the natural or moral perfection of God? The proclaiming a universal amnesty to all his revolted subjects, would

seem to imply a conviction, either that his laws were too rigid to be obeyed, or that his arm was too weak to punish such a multitude of revolters. The plan which has been adopted, of providing an atonement for one world of apostates, in distinction from another; and of exercising special and sovereign grace among those for whom this provision has been made, commends itself to our understanding, as a plan that guards against the dangerous consequences which would naturally result from the extension of pardon to all transgressors.

2. They who oppose the doctrine of this Article, are opposing *facts* as well as texts. From the beginning down to the present time, one has been taken and another left; and in many instances the one who has been taken has been to all appearance the most unlikely to become the subject of divine grace. When the whole company of the redeemed shall be brought together in the kingdom of their Father, they will all be ready to ascribe their salvation to the distinguishing grace of God. That great multitude who will be gathered into the fold of Christ during the millenium, will be prepared to give God the glory of making their period of probation so mercifully to differ from that of others. To the question, Who maketh thee to differ from another? every ransomed soul will readily respond, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

3. Hostility to the sovereignty of grace is most unreasonable; since it is hating God for his GOODNESS. "Is thine eye evil because I am good?" will forcibly apply to every man who is found caviling at this doctrine. On supposition, that God did something for Abel which he did not for Cain—something which justice laid him under no obligation to do for either; that he did something for Jacob that he did not for Esau; and something for the penitent thief which he did not for his fellow; how unreasonable it must have been for Cain and Esau and the impenitent thief to have been displeased with him on this account? It would be nothing else than being displeased with him for doing good; for if he had not conferred a special favor on their fellows, it is implied, that the ground of their objection would not have existed. Should those who live before and after the millenium, murmur against God, on account of the very peculiar favor he confers on those who are privileged by living in that period, would it not be finding fault with him for doing good? The opposition which this doctrine excites, wherever it is proclaimed, and especially where it is confirmed by actual displays of discriminating grace, is among the most striking proofs that men hate God; and that they hate him for possessing that character in which he glories. If we are disgusted with that feature of his character, which (as we have seen) he considers as excelling in glory, can we be in a state of preparation to enjoy God?

4. This doctrine furnishes great encouragement to pray for the conversion of sinners; and even for such as are stout-hearted, and far from righteousness. In prayer we make our application to Him whose right it is to dispense grace, and who has power to quicken whom he will. He has taken the mercy seat, and waits to receive such petitions as we shall present in our own behalf, and in behalf of our friends and fellow sinners. The more enlarged views we can get of the greatness of his power and grace, the more prepared shall we be to open



our mouth wide, and pour out our hearts in humble prayer before him.

5. At the close of these remarks, I would say to the individual who is wishing to get rid of the doctrine of this Article, You know not what you do. You would fain flee out of the hand of a sovereign God; but were you able to do it, where would you flee for help? If you remain in your present state, you must die; if you go any where for help but to God, it will be in vain. Fall into his hands, without waiting to know what will be the result of it. He is holy, just and good. In his sovereign grace there is hope for a sinner, a great sinner; yea, even for the chief of sinners.

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## ARTICLE X.

THE GRACE OF GOD, DISPLAYED IN RENEWING THE HEARTS OF SINNERS, IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PURPOSE OF ELECTION.

THE doctrine, which is the subject of the present Article, has been thought to be peculiarly difficult to be understood. Let this circumstance excite us to examine it with peculiar attention, praying that we may be directed by the clear light of God's word. Surely it behooves those who read, as well as him who writes, to desire to know what God has said on this subject. A day is coming when both must meet in the presence of their common Judge. Then must the writer give an account for every sentiment he communicates, and the readers for the manner in which they receive his communications. The same divine standard should regulate him in writing, and them in reading. If it should so be, that this disputed doctrine has heretofore been misunderstood by any of us, let us remember, that to continue under such mistake can be of no advantage to our immortal interests.

Election and predestination, as used in the scriptures, are of similar import. They relate to the eternal purpose of God concerning the holiness and blessedness of a part of his intelligent creatures, in distinction from that part which will forever be sinful and wretched. The holy angels are called "the elect angels," to distinguish them from the angels which kept not their first estate. 1 Tim. v. 21. But these terms most commonly apply to *men*, and they imply God's purpose concerning the salvation of such as will be recovered from the ruins of the fall by Jesus Christ.

All Christian denominations, Universalists excepted, believe that a part only of our fallen race will actually be saved: and it must be granted by all, that those who shall at length be brought to heaven, will be the very ones whom God chose, all things considered, to save. But very different opinions are entertained concerning the cause of their being chosen unto salvation. These opinions are, however, capable of being reduced to two classes; for we must all make election either

*conditional* or *unconditional*. That which is conditional, assumes; that the choice of God is determined by something preferable in the character of the elect, or in foresight of their better improvement of the same means of grace: but that which is unconditional, supposes the divine choice to have fixed on the *persons* of the elect—it also supposes that all which is really excellent in their character, together with their better improvement of the means of grace, is to be considered as the effect, and not the cause of their gracious predestination.

Among the gifts of God's common providence, some are bestowed on conditions, and others without conditions. In promising to bestow the fruits of the field, God requires its cultivation as a requisite condition: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread." Gen. iii. 19. But the revolution of day and night, summer and winter, and the assurance we have that the earth shall not again be deluged with water, are blessings which are suspended on no conditions to be performed by us.

In the kingdom of grace, as well as that of providence, some gifts are bestowed without conditions. The atonement, that unspeakable gift, is one of this class. Irrespective of any good thing to be done by our first parents or any of their children, God declared his purpose to give the woman a seed which should bruise the head of the serpent. The *result* of this gift, in the rescue of an innumerable multitude from the dominion of the god of this world, is no less unconditional than the atonement itself. The Redeemer has a sure promise, in consideration of what he himself has done, that he shall see of the travail of his soul—that his people (*his* by his Father's gift,) shall be willing in the day of his power. On the promise of his Father, and not on the will of rebellious men, he makes his dependence for the continuation of his kingdom on earth. It is this promise which emboldens him to say, "All the Father giveth me shall come to me."

There are other blessings of grace which are suspended on conditions to be performed by *us*. The pardon of sin is suspended on the condition of our repentance; deliverance from the curse of the law, on our acceptance of the atonement. It is as true of those whom the Father has given to his Son, as of any others, that except they repent they will perish; except they believe they will be damned. But even their repentance and faith are secured to their Redeemer by a covenant, the blessings of which rest on His faithfulness, and not on their own.

To me it would seem no more proper to say, that the election of grace depends on conditions to be performed by sinful men, than to say the same concerning the atonement. But in saying it is without conditions, we do not mean that they who were chosen in Christ will be saved, whether they repent and believe, or remain impenitent and unbelieving. Their being ordained to eternal life, includes their repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, together with every thing else which is necessary to their salvation. But what we maintain is this; that while it is proper to say, God forgives sinners on condition of their exercising repentance and faith, it is improper to represent *their election as resting on such conditions, or on any other conditions which they themselves fulfil.*

In support of election, in the unconditional sense, I will now bring forward several arguments, which to my own mind have appeared conclusive.

1. The scriptures put election or predestination *before effectual calling*; and this they appear to do by design, as being their natural order: "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called." Rom. viii. 30. Men are here represented as first predestinated, and then called; and their being called into the kingdom of Christ is the very thing to which they were predestinated. In the context of the passage just quoted, God is said to *predestinate* sinful men *to be conformed* to the image of his Son. In the same connexion the apostle speaks of them who love God, as called *according to his purpose*; which not only implies that his purpose precedes their calling, but also that their calling is the very thing to which his purpose related. In the beginning of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians he reminds them, that God chose them in Christ before the foundation of the world, *that they should be holy*. He seems desirous they should know, that they were chosen *unto holiness*, and not on account of any thing of this nature foreseen to exist in them. The same view of the matter is given in that declaration of the Savior, to which I have already had occasion to refer: *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me*. They appear to be given to the Son, in order to their coming to him, and not because it was foreseen they would come.

If predestination is the purpose of God to renew hearts which are entirely depraved, it cannot be based on any goodness of character. What can be more absurd than to say, it is owing to some goodness in the sinner, that God determines to *originate* goodness in him; or to say, that in consideration of the life that remains in him, or which is seen to be reviving, God determines to raise him from the dead? Had predestination been the purpose of God to pardon the penitent, it might be proper to term it conditional; but since it is the purpose of God to give repentance to those whose character is entirely sinful, there can be no conditions on which it can be grounded.

2. Goodness of character *is explicitly declared not to have been the reason* why those who are saved were, in distinction from others, chosen to salvation. The nation of Israel were repeatedly admonished, not to ascribe it to their superior righteousness, that they were chosen to enjoy the distinguished privilege of being the people of the only living and true God. Deut. vii. 7, 8, and ix. 4—6. Ezek. xvi. 1—8<sup>d</sup>. Paul, after having spoken of the small number of true worshipers who were found in Israel in the days of the prophet Elijah, thus speaks of his own time; "Even so then at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace." In the next verse he makes us understand what he intended by *the election of grace*: "And if by grace, it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace." Rom. xi. 5, 6. Can this be anything less than an assertion, that the works of the elect were in no sense the cause of their election? This is plainly the sentiment he designs to communicate, in what he says concerning Jacob's being chosen in distinction from Esau: "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works,



but of him that calleth." To show that the purpose of God, in mercifully distinguishing Jacob from Esau, was not originated by any foresight of the existence of a better character in Jacob, it is particularly noted that the choice was made before they had done either good or evil; and then we are expressly told it was not of works, but of him that calleth; which is the same as to attribute it to the good pleasure of God, and not to any original goodness seen in him who was the object of the divine choice.

Paul, in writing to Timothy, contradistinguishes a calling, which is according to God's purpose and grace, from one which is according to works; but if the purpose of God had been founded on the foreseen good works of those who are called, where would there be any room for this contrast? Here is the passage referred to: "Who hath saved and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace." 2 Tim. i. 9. Some may say, "We grant it is not for any good works which men do *before* they come to Christ that they are elected; it is rather because they *come* to him, renouncing all their own works, and make choice of him for their Savior." Still if our *good choice* were the thing which determined the mind of God to call us with a holy calling, it is as much according to our works that we are called, as if some outward act of obedience had been made the reason of our election. But the divine Teacher, anticipating the distinction which some would make between good works and a good choice, let his disciples know they were not elected in view of their better *choice*, any more than on account of some other distinction of character. These are his words, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." "Your choice of me is subsequent to my choice of you; *that* is the effect, of which *this* is the cause." And did he not make this representation on purpose to raise their views of his free grace, and to lower their high thoughts of themselves?

It is evident that Paul was far from considering himself to have been comprehended in the number of the elect, on account of any peculiar goodness he had while remaining in unbelief. In his view, the greatness, rather than the smallness of his guilt, operated as a reason for his obtaining mercy. It is true, he spoke of his ignorance in unbelief, as that which prevented his sin from being unpardonable; but not as that which entitled him to pardon. On the contrary, he considered his deadly opposition to the religion of Christ as furnishing one of the reasons for his salvation; since it fitted him to be a striking monument of the richest grace. Hear his own words: "For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them that should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." 1 Tim. i. 16.

If the elect, while remaining in unregeneracy, were possessed of any good traits of character, which furnish the reasons for their being chosen unto salvation, why are they not known by these discriminating traits? Why are they distinguished from their fellow sinners by their *future*, rather than by their present character? Is it not because they have no traits of character, while remaining unregenerate, which make them differ materially from other men? If, therefore, there is occasion

for their being distinguished at all, it must be done by applying to them names indicative of that character which, in the purpose of God, they are hereafter to possess. Hence it is, that the scriptures even now denominate them the Lord's *sheep*, and *people*, and *children*. See John x. 16. Ps. cx. 3. Acts xviii. 10. John xi. 52.

3. The *eternity* of God's choice of the elect, is among the arguments furnished by the scriptures to prove it to be unconditional. Paul, in that epistle which he wrote to the churches of Galatia, (and for the very purpose of establishing them in the doctrines of grace,) makes this interesting statement concerning himself: "When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me." Here the infinite blessing he had received, in being called into the kingdom of grace, is traced back to a purpose which God had concerning his salvation from the day of his birth. In this statement we seem to hear the apostle say, "All the while I remained the enemy of God and the persecutor of his friends, he had his merciful eye upon me, and at length, in accordance with his benevolent purpose, he called me by his grace." Jacob's being elected before he was born, and before he could have done anything to draw forth the complacency of his Maker, has already been adverted to; and I would now remark; that the account which the apostle gives concerning his being so early an object of the divine choice, is manifestly designed to establish this point, that the choice was not grounded on any good works of his, either done or foreseen.

Paul, in tracing the purpose of God concerning his own salvation up to his birth, and concerning that of Jacob to a still earlier period, ought not to be understood to say, that in either of these cases he had gone back to the farthest limit of the divine purpose. Concerning the saints at Ephesus, including himself, he says, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy." Here the purpose of election is carried back to a period antecedent to the creation of the world; and it is manifestly done to prove that they were not chosen for the sake of any holiness foreseen in them, but for the purpose of imparting it to them. In that passage, in the first chapter of Paul's second epistle to Timothy, where God's purpose and grace are placed in opposition to our works as the procuring cause of our salvation, they are said to be given us in Christ before the world began. The scriptures do not speak of men as *pardoned* and *justified* before they are born into the world, nor before they are born of the Spirit; for they are pardoned and justified, considered as renovated characters, as penitent believers; but since election relates to them as mere sinners, and implies the purpose of God to bring them into conformity to himself, it is with propriety represented as being antecedent both to their spiritual and natural birth, and even to the creation of the world.

I have now made a brief statement of what appears to me a plain scriptural account of the doctrine under consideration. It has already been suggested, that this doctrine has been considered as one which is peculiarly difficult to be understood: but I am not able to see wherein this peculiar difficulty consists. That it does more than some other doctrines to draw forth opposition from our selfish hearts, will not be

disputed. But if it be meant, that the doctrine is inexplicable, or that its tendency is to destroy the other doctrines of the gospel, it is far from being true.

The two different schemes of election, namely, the *conditional* and the *unconditional*, I will now place before the reader, by a familiar illustration. We will suppose two houses of stone are to be erected, and the plan of each is laid down. To build one of them, the surrounding country is searched to find stones of such a size, figure, and smoothness, as will fit into the walls. To build the other, the workmen are sent directly to the mountains to dig them out of the quarry. Their shape and smoothness are not the cause of their being selected; since they are to receive their figure and polish from the hand of the workmen, after the selection is made. The first of these buildings will illustrate that scheme of the doctrine, which makes the choice of God depend on good moral qualities foreseen in the elect: the other illustrates that view of the doctrine which has been given in the preceding pages.

It may be thought by some, that the word *foreknowledge*, which is used more than once in relation to this subject, tends to give support to an election which is conditional. Paul says, "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." And Peter says, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience." It is manifest, however, that neither of these apostles speaks concerning God's foreknowledge of the elect, as though it were based on any goodness discovered in them. Paul speaks of those whom God foreknew, as still needing to be predestinated to a conformity to the image of his Son. And Peter represents such as were elected according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, as being brought to obedience by the sanctification of the Spirit. This representation of Peter agrees with what Paul writes to the Thessalonians, when he tells them, God had from the beginning chosen them to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. As they were chosen to salvation, so the sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth, as a preparation for the enjoyment of that salvation, were comprehended in the divine purpose concerning them. We have seen a number of passages where the terms *election*, *predestination*, and *purpose*, are manifestly introduced with an express design to exclude any original goodness from being considered as the cause why some are chosen to salvation in distinction from others. But I presume no passage can be found where God's foreknowledge of the salvation of men is declared to be built on any such original differences of character.

If *foreknowledge* be considered as a distinct thing from predestination, and yet preceding it in the order of nature, it must be understood as synonymous with that *knowledge* or wisdom which God employs in selecting the objects of his choice, the monuments of his grace. His choice of the elect, though not regulated by their goodness, is not made without the exercise of the most consummate wisdom and prudence. See Eph. i. 8. The glory of the divine name, and the good of the moral system, are always consulted. The word *foreknowledge*, as it is used in these passages, may mean the same as purpose. When



Paul says, "Whom he did foreknow, them he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son," he may be understood to use the word *foreknowledge*, for God's general purpose to save the elect; and *predestinate*, for his special purpose to prepare them for that salvation, by bringing them into a spiritual likeness to their divine Head.

It is objected against the doctrine of election, that it necessarily implies, as its counterpart, the doctrine of *reprobation*. It is true that the election of some, in distinction from their fellows, must imply the non-election or reprobation of the rest. So the conversion of a particular part of mankind by the Spirit of God, supposes the other part not to receive the favor of converting grace. God has an end to answer by the vessels of mercy prepared unto glory; also by the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and the ultimate end is the same in both cases, namely, the display of his holy character, to the benefit of the intelligent universe. They who are not included in the election of grace, were not left out through ill will or indifference. An infinite regard to the interests of an extensive and everlasting kingdom led to this result. Mysterious as it may seem, the only wise God saw it would be best that the Stone, which he should lay in Zion for a foundation, should also be "a stone of stumbling and rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, *whereunto also they were appointed.*" 1 Pet. ii. 8.

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

This Article so entirely coalesces with the one we last considered, that some may think it not distinguishable from it. The distinction is merely this; sovereign grace, in renewing the hearts of men, represents God as *now* making a difference in their character, according to his good pleasure; whereas predestination carries this matter back to eternity, and shows us that the difference, which we see him now making by his special grace, is one he always intended to make. Predestination informs us, that those whom God now calls by his grace, are "called according to his *purpose.*" Once grant, it is by the grace of God that some sinners, in distinction from others, become believers, and you must admit the doctrine of personal election. If it is God who has begotten us, it must be of *his own will* that he begat us; for he could not do it without an intention. What could be more absurd than to say, God has given to a certain man (Saul of Tarsus, for example) a new heart; but he did it without intending it—or at least, without an intention of giving it to him in distinction from any other man? If God intends to give a new heart at the moment when he does it, he must have always had the intention; else there is a new purpose in his mind, and he is not unchangeable. But we are assured, that "the counsel of the Lord standeth forever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations." Ps. xxxiii. 11.

If we can see it consistent for God at the present time to have mercy on one sinner and harden another, to regenerate one and leave another unregenerated, there need be no difficulty with the doctrine of election, which implies no more than this; that the difference which is now

made is the result of his eternal counsel. Surely if it becomes him at the present time to do what he does, there can be no reasonable objection against his having always purposed to do so. On the contrary, this augments our conceptions of his goodness; since it proves him to have been from eternity possessed of that excellency of character which by his benevolent acts he is now displaying before us. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." Here, for the sake of increasing the revenue of praise, the apostle teaches the saints at Ephesus, to trace the stream of their spiritual blessings back to the eternal electing love of God as its source. Eph. i. 3, 4.

In pointing out the harmony between this Article and the *ninth*, it was impossible to avoid showing its agreement with the *eighth*. The agreement between regeneration, as held by the orthodox, and personal election, can be seen at a glance. Regeneration does not wait for the sinner's heart to become good before it commences its operations. It has never found a heart in any other state than that of entire alienation from God; yet this has not prevented the exertion of its transforming influence. Since predestination, according to divine arrangement, has an antecedence to regeneration, it could never be originated by the discovery of anything morally good in the objects of its choice. Regeneration and election agree in this, they are both of them *personal* and *unconditional*. As particular *persons*, and not particular characters, are called out of darkness into marvellous light, so also particular persons were predestinated to enjoy this favor. As the grace of regeneration could never be displayed, if it were suspended on acceptable conditions, to be performed by creatures dead in trespasses and sins, so it must have been with the grace of election. If renewing grace finds the sinner altogether impure, *the purpose of God to renew him* must, of course, have contemplated him as destitute of every thing that could attract the divine complacency.

Let us next see what agreement this Article has with the *sixth* and *seventh*. The *sixth* Article exhibits the God of grace freely offering pardon to every man, who shall accept of the terms on which the offer is made. Now if it were a fact, that some sinners stood ready to accept the offer, and yet, because they were not included in the number of the elect, could not be received to favor, there would be a palpable disagreement between that and the present Article. If God has made the offer of salvation to every man who shall comply with gospel proposals, then every man who complies will most assuredly be saved. *Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.* These are the words of TRUTH itself, and they will stand, if heaven and earth should pass away.

One of the most formidable objections to the doctrine of personal election, has been originated by the presumption, that it lessened the number who would receive the benefit of the atonement. But does the word of God, or do any of the ministers of the word who preach this doctrine, represent it as excluding from the divine favor a single penitent? The doctrines which may with more propriety be considered as lessening the number of the saved, are those that increase the qualifi-

cations requisite to an admission into heaven, and thus diminish the number who can claim the privilege of being admitted there. It would be more proper to raise this objection against the doctrine of regeneration; especially against that view of it, which makes disinterested affection essential to its genuineness. The predestination, which is revealed in the scriptures, we may rest satisfied, is not against the promises which are therein revealed. Has the God of truth said, "He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy?" then such an one will assuredly find mercy. No decree of election or reprobation will prevent it. Has he said, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely?" then there is no secret purpose which will in the least degree hinder the willing soul from drinking its fill of the water of life.

Thus have we seen, that the *sixth* Article is not at all invalidated by the one now under consideration. And we ought not to forget that the *seventh*, which exhibits the sinner's indisposition to accept of the proffered salvation, is as fully supported by scripture testimony as the *sixth*. All men when invited, and even urged to the gospel feast, refuse to come; and, so long as they are left to their native choice, continue to refuse. Now with this fact before us, what would there be to insure the salvation of a single sinner, if the doctrine of election were excluded from our system? The great Omniscient knew what was in man. He well knew that man's heart was fully set to do evil, and in a state of entire opposition to his holy character, whether exhibited in the punishment or in the pardon of sin. He must of consequence have foreseen that the gospel, though worthy of all acceptance, would in fact be rejected by all. What, then, could make it sure, that in such a world as this the Shepherd would gather a flock, or that the King, set on the holy hill of Zion, would be able to gain any subjects? There was nothing, except the immutable purpose of God, that the sheep should hear his voice and follow him; and that rebellious foes should become willing subjects in the day of his power. On this, and not on the depraved will of man, was the Redeemer's dependence for a people to serve him.

The agreement of the present Article with the *sixth* and *seventh* could not be shown, without discovering at the same time its agreement with the *fifth*. Were the doctrine of election, in the unconditional sense, dropped out of our creed, the infinite atonement might be wholly lost as to its saving efficacy: there would be nothing to insure the Redeemer a reward for his obedience unto death. But the doctrine of which we are now treating, shows that things are not left in such uncertainty. Hear the declaration of the evangelical prophet; "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed—the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see the travail of his soul—he shall justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death."

"But what harmony (it may be asked) can there be between a *particular election* and a *general atonement*?" On this point, I am sensible, there exists a difference of opinion among men whose views of Christian doctrine, for the most part, are the same. To prevent all contention concerning things in which we are agreed, let our brethren, who



consider the atonement to be as limited in its provision as in its application, understand, that they who hold a different sentiment, do not oppose a limited atonement on the ground of *injustice*. We are ready to acknowledge, as God was under no obligation in point of justice to save any of his fallen creatures, he was at full liberty to provide for the salvation of a part, without being under obligation to provide for the salvation of the rest. The consistency of this he has strikingly illustrated, inasmuch as he has passed by all the rebellious angels, without making any provision for them to enjoy a second probation. We grant, that since our offended Sovereign might justly have abandoned the whole of Adam's race, and provided no atonement for any of them, he was at full liberty, in case he did make such a provision, to restrict it to the elect. Had the human race been considered as thrown into two great divisions, separated by the Atlantic ocean, he would have had an undoubted right to provide an atonement for that portion inhabiting the eastern continent, without including in this provision the inhabitants of the western. But, in case the provision had been limited to the eastern continent, would he have sent his servants to the western, to invite them also to partake of its blessings?

As we wish our brethren not to mistake our sentiments, so we will endeavor not to misunderstand theirs. We know that they believe with us in the infinite greatness of our Redeemer, and consequently in the infinitude of his atonement for sin. They do not suppose the atonement fails of being general, through any defect in its nature or fulness. They will grant, I presume, that in case it had pleased God to make the atonement general, no greater sufferer, nor greater sufferings would have been required.

In the things which have now been stated, both sides are agreed. They are also agreed in believing there is a limitation as to the extent of the blessings of salvation to be enjoyed by the children of Adam; and this limitation they both trace back to an eternal purpose of the divine mind. The point of disagreement between them, relates to the place where to fix the limitation. The one side fix it in the provision made, and the other in its application. They who believe in a general atonement, think there is no harmony between a particular atonement and a general offer of its benefits; and their brethren seem to think, that a general atonement and particular election are altogether incongruous.

But why, I would ask, is there not as much congruity between a general provision of grace, and a particular election of the persons who are to be savingly benefited by it, as between general provisions to preserve the innocency of creatures, under the covenant of works, and a purpose to render those provisions effectual to only a part of them? All the angels had the offer of eternal life, under the covenant of works, while only a part of them were actually benefited by those provisions. Those who received the benefit and kept their first estate, are called "the elect angels." They were elected, in distinction from their associates who apostatized, as much as those who are saved from among men were elected, in distinction from such as are lost. And the election of the former was as early, and as unconditional as that of the latter. If the non-election of the apostate angels did not prevent them

from enjoying a state of probation under the covenant of works, we can see no reason why the non-election of a part of the children of Adam should hinder their enjoyment of a probation of mercy. As the blessings of the first covenant were proffered to all the angels, irrespective of the divine purpose respecting them; so are the blessings of the new covenant proffered to all the children of men; and if we, to whom these blessings are proffered, are lost, it is because we neglect the great salvation.

Between this and the *fourth* Article the harmony is very apparent. In *this* Article it has been shown that God's purpose was not based on any goodness of character foreseen in the elect: in *that*, man's natural state, until changed by regenerating grace, was shown to be entirely corrupt. Now it is evident, that in case our views of man's natural state are correct, our views of the unconditional nature of election can not be wrong; for if no degree of goodness is to be found in the hearts of the unregenerate, then most certainly goodness of character can not furnish the reason for their being chosen: unless by goodness be meant lower degrees of depravity among creatures entirely destitute of holiness. We will not say there is not this difference between the unregenerate. Nor would we say, that God does not more commonly take his elect from among the moral than from among the vicious. Yet it is made evident, both from scripture and fact, that he not unfrequently passes by the moral, and takes the vicious: which is enough to show that morality, or unregenerate goodness, entitles no man to a place among God's elect; and that great wickedness does not necessarily preclude a sinner from being comprehended in that number. It is also evident, if the moral are entirely destitute of holiness, and, consequently, of a disposition to accede to the holy terms of salvation, their election must be as unconditional as that of the most hardened rebels. Equally in both cases they must be chosen, not because they are holy, but that they should be holy: they must be predestinated unto conformity to the image of Christ, and not on account of the least approximation to such conformity that is discovered in their natural hearts.

If the agreement of this Article with the *third* be not discovered at the first glance, as was its agreement with the *fourth*, there is certainly no disagreement. The third Article exhibits the law of God as a perfect rule, laying an obligation on all men to be holy, in imitation of their Creator. To this law the carnal mind, the natural heart of every man, obstinately refuses subjection. On creatures of such a character, the law might execute the penalty of eternal death, and the throne of Heaven would be guiltless. Instead, therefore, of our having reason to complain, that among the many who are called so few are chosen, we are really laid under everlasting obligation to give thanks and praise to God, that we are not all left under the curse of his holy law, to suffer the due reward of our deeds.

This Article is in harmony with those two with which our system commenced. Is it reasonable to believe, that a Being of infinite perfection would undertake to work without a plan; or that, in the chief of all his works, he should have no definite object which he designed to accomplish? Would it be worthy of the character, which we have seen to be claimed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to

suppose him to have given his Son to die for sinners, without his determining what should be the result of such a costly sacrifice ! Election is that doctrine in our system, which secures a happy result to the death of Christ, even the glory that should follow, in the salvation of all those who were given to him of the Father. "Having predestinated us," said the grateful apostle, "unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace."

Thus have we seen that election, in the sense it was understood by the Reformers, and as it has ever been understood by the Orthodox, is plainly a scriptural doctrine, and that it constitutes one essential link in the harmonious chain of gospel truth. Who, I now ask, can point to a single text which denies or contemns this doctrine ? Is there a text which tells us, all were predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ, one as much as another ? or that one man was no more chosen in Christ Jesus than another ? If it should be said, "The reason why the scripture has not refuted the doctrine is, that it did not contemplate its existence ;" I would ask, what doctrine is that which the apostle supposes would draw forth this objection ; *Why doth he yet find fault for who hath resisted his will ?* Rom. ix. 19.

The argument against this doctrine which is derived from the declaration, "God is no respecter of persons," I believe is relied on as much as any other ; but in reality it is nothing to the point. This was shown under the Article immediately preceding the one now under consideration ; to which the reader is referred. Where, then, is the class of texts, or even the solitary passage, which explicitly or implicitly opposes the doctrine in question ? I know there are many who imagine, that all that part of the word of God that shows the offer of salvation to be general, is so much proof against any predetermined limitation, as to the success with which this offer should meet. But those who adopt the doctrine of a particular election, still believe there is a free offer of salvation made to all : and as they believe, so they speak and so they preach. And they see no more propriety in denying one of these truths of revelation than the other ; no more, in making use of the free offer, to annul the doctrine of election, than in making use of this, to destroy that. They are both revealed ; and, for aught that we can see, with equal clearness : why, then, should they not both be believed ?

Some may think that all those passages of scripture, which teach the importance of preaching and hearing the gospel, are so many proofs against the truth of this doctrine. But if, as we have seen, there is no divine purpose to obstruct the way of those who are disposed to accept the gospel offer, what discouragement can this doctrine present either to the preacher or to the hearer ? Is it not actually an encouraging doctrine ? If there is a purpose in the divine mind, which insures the salvation of a multitude of the human race, and of some in every generation, it is easy to see how a knowledge of the fact should serve to encourage both the preacher and the hearers. See Acts xviii. 10.

But does not the purpose of God to save a particular number of the race, render preaching and hearing needless ? No more than the plan, which an architect draws concerning the house he is about to build,



renders needless all the subsequent labor he expends and employs to carry it into execution. Means certainly are not rendered useless by being made subservient to a plan. As God's plan concerning the tabernacle included every board and socket, every curtain and loop, and the labor requisite to complete the whole ; so it is with his purpose in relation to the redeemed church ; it embraces every thing which is requisite to be done. Much is to be effected by human instrumentality ; but it is all comprehended in the consistent counsel of His will, who has the sovereign control of all the actions of men. Paul did not consider the purpose of election as rendering it needless to preach the gospel to unbelievers. If he had, we should not have heard him say, "Therefore I endure all things for the *elect's* sakes, that *they may also obtain* the salvation which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. ii. 10.

But does not this doctrine free the non-elect from blame ; and thus prove itself to be utterly incapable of a scriptural defense ? If the doctrine be first condemned, as possessing a character so vile as to make it a crime to speak a word in its behalf, there will be no possibility of preventing its condemnation, though a host of plain texts of scripture should witness in its favor. I now demand proof of the allegation, that this doctrine frees from blame such as are not elected. Is not this plea invented by those who wish to sin, and yet hate to be blamed for it ? Let it be remembered, it is the very nature of sin to seek to rid itself of the blame it incurs. The slothful servant in the parable evidently wished to clear himself from the guilt attached to slothfulness, though he had done nothing. To clear himself, he condemned his Master : "Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man."

The children of the wicked one act agreeably to their ungodly nature, when, on finding out that God is fulfilling his purposes by their sins, they exclaim, "Why doth he yet find fault ? for who hath resisted his will ?"—and when they say concerning those abominations, which they would no sooner part with than with their right eye, "We are *delivered* to do all these abominations." The great difficulty of reasoning with men on this subject, arises from this circumstance ; that they seem to require that *their hearts should be pleased*, before they will suffer *their understandings to be convinced*.

The non-elect are chargeable with guilt, and the elect too, for all their unregenerate obstinacy. When this obstinacy is removed from the hearts of any, they condemn it as a criminal thing : and it is not the less criminal where it remains. If the demand be made of the fool in whose hand a price is put to get wisdom, why he does not become wise ; he must own, it is because he has no heart to it. This disinclination of heart to get wisdom is highly criminal. Nor can its coincidence with the purposes of God destroy or lessen its criminality. This coincidence was what Joseph very distinctly placed before his brethren, at the very time he was using every expedient in his power to bring them to exercise a godly sorrow for their sin. The same was done by Peter, in that memorable sermon on the day of Pentecost, the object of which was to bring the crucifiers of Christ to unfeigned repentance. Gen. xlv. 5—8. Acts ii. 23.

How, it may be asked, can a knowledge of the fact, that our wickedness has not frustrated, but fulfilled the decrees of God, have any

tendency to increase our conviction of guilt for the commission of that wickedness? To this I reply in few words: While a knowledge of this fact does nothing to destroy in our minds a consciousness of criminality for *voluntary* wickedness, it is calculated to promote repentance, by exalting our views of the greatness and holiness of that God against whom all our sin has been committed. It shows us that he is so great as to be able to rule his enemies, and even their enmity itself; and that he is so holy as to make a good use of their sin, causing it to further the designs of his benevolence. It shows that the elect will be to the praise of the glory of his grace, and the reprobate to the praise of the glory of his justice. Rom. ix. 21—23. Could the enemies of God believe they had already frustrated his designs, they might hope to do it in future; and in that case I am persuaded he would not appear so terrible to them as he now does. There would not be all the motives that now exist, to urge their immediate and unconditional submission to his holy and uncontrollable sovereignty.

But it is unnecessary further to pursue this train of thought. What has been already said will serve to show, that the doctrine of this Article is not only true, and in harmony with the whole scheme of grace, but also that it is a doctrine which is capable of exerting a practical and salutary influence.

#### REMARKS.

1. Predestination, or a divine purpose, presents no more of an obstacle to our salvation, than it does to our acquisition of temporal good. The purpose of God extends to the one as much as to the other. If it is a discouragement to our making an effort to be saved, it is equally so in relation to those efforts which we make to gain property, health, or any other temporal good. Yet it so happens, that the same man, who considers a divine purpose as a sufficient reason for his neglecting the means of grace and the concerns of his soul, does not think of its being any reason at all, why he should neglect the appointed means of procuring property, or preserving the health of his body. How shall we account for this marked difference in the two cases? It is accounted for by that entire aversion which the natural heart has to holiness, and to the use of those means by which it is obtained and increased. Had men been as willing to labor for the meat that endureth to everlasting life, as for that which perisheth, predestination would never have been thought of as presenting an obstacle in their way, in the one case more than in the other.

2. From the view which we have taken of the election of grace, we do not perceive how the prospect of salvation to a world of sinners would be at all brightened by striking this doctrine from our creeds. Were it stricken out, there would still be no hope of salvation to any but those who, by accepting the gospel offer, become meet for the heavenly inheritance. And surely this doctrine does not throw the least obstacle in the way of any sinner of this character. When the Savior had said, "All the Father giveth me shall come unto me;" lest some poor broken-hearted sinner should be afraid he was not comprehended

in the number which was given to him, he adds, "and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." If such a thing could be, that a sinner, who was not included in the number which the Father gave his Son, should actually come to the Son, *this promise* would secure his salvation. He would in no wise be cast out. Now if election presents no difficulty in the way of the sinner's salvation, in addition to that which arises from his own depravity, he is very uncandid in charging this doctrine with being the blame-worthy cause of his everlasting ruin.

3. Under this Article I would take occasion to remark upon the sin and folly of a practice, which is not uncommon in our world, of spending our life in caviling at the doctrines of God's word. Among those who admit the inspiration of the Bible, there are not a few who seem to spend their lives in picking flaws and raising objections against it. One would think, they supposed this would answer in the room of knowing and obeying its holy truths. While they acknowledge it to be the word of God, it would seem as if they really expected they should be able to convince its divine Author, that he had in many instances contradicted himself; and that he had introduced some doctrines into the gospel, which furnish them with a good excuse for neglecting those invitations of mercy which it proffers, and which it commands them to accept. There are many of those that do not deny the truth of the doctrine, which we are now considering, who are nevertheless always finding fault with it, and talking about it just as if it furnished them a substantial excuse for continuing impenitent. Do they not know, that if it is a doctrine of God's word, it can furnish no such excuse? How evident is it that it behooves all, whether preachers or hearers, writers or readers, to seek to understand (not to misunderstand) and to harmonize, (not to perplex) the doctrines and precepts of that book, which we profess to receive as a revelation of the will of God. There is much force in the proverb, "A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not; but knowledge is easy to him that understandeth." It was in the spirit of this proverb that Christ made the declaration, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." If a docile could take the place of a caviling spirit, it would be comparatively easy to acquire the knowledge of divine truth. Now he that murmured would learn doctrine. Nor would there be any peculiar difficulty in learning the doctrine of the present Article.



## ARTICLE XI.

THE REGENERATE ARE JUSTIFIED BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST, AND NOT FOR THE SAKE OF ANYTHING MERITORIOUS, EITHER IN THEIR FAITH OR GOOD WORKS.

JUSTIFICATION is a law term, which, in its most natural signification, implies the acquittal of the innocent. "If," said Moses to Israel, "there be a controversy between men, and they come into judgment, that the judges may judge them; then shall they *justify the righteous*, and condemn the wicked." Deut. xxv. 1. In every case where they found the law had been broken, the judges were required to pass a sentence of condemnation, and not of justification. But in this strict sense of the term, who in this fallen world could be justified before God? Well might the man after God's own heart say, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." Ps. cxliii. 2. Yet in the evangelical sense of the word, David was a justified man; and so is every other man who is born of God. "In the Lord shall *all* the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." Isa. xlv. 25.

Justification in this evangelical sense, neither implies the entire innocence of the justified, nor any such degree of it as to render them undeserving of condemnation. The scripture pronounces the whole world guilty before God; and thence infers, that by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in his sight. Rom. iii. 19, 20. The gospel justification does not declare us innocent; yet it effectually removes the sentence of condemnation which our transgressions had incurred. It is the province of a legal justification to absolve from the unjust charge of guilt the man who is found to be guiltless: but gospel justification absolves from deserved punishment him who is found guilty.

Regeneration and justification, though intimately connected, are not the same thing. The first relates to a change in the sinner's *character*, the last to a change in his *condition*. While regeneration is a *work*, wrought on the sinner's heart, justification is an *act* of divine government, exonerating him from that punishment which is due to his sins. It ought to be understood, that it is not necessary, in the very nature of things, that *pardon* should be connected with repentance. Certainly it is not so in human governments. Who ever imagined that the repentance of the murderer served to annihilate his guilt, so as to render his punishment cruel, or even unnecessary? His repentance may be a good preparation for the reversal of his sentence: but the reversal still depends on the good pleasure of the authority invested with the power of extending pardons to the guilty. Under the government of the Most High, pardon is considered as a distinct thing from that renovation of heart which prepares the way for its consistent exercise. Justification follows regeneration in every instance: "Whom

he called, them he also justified"—and yet it is a thing entirely distinct from it.

Since the doctrine of justification is fundamental to the gospel system, and a mistake here has proved fatal to very many candidates for the retributions of eternity, it behooves us to proceed with great care in its investigation. Let us advance step by step, examining all the ground as we pass along. It is a matter of great consequence that we form a clear and definite idea of the contrast which the word of God makes between justification by *works*, and by *grace*, to enable us to form a definite idea of what is meant, when it declares the believer's justification to be not by works, but by grace. Nothing is asserted with more peremptoriness, than the utter impossibility of our justification by the works of the law. "Therefore by the deeds of the law," says Paul to the Romans, "there shall no flesh be justified in his sight:" and to the Galatians he says, "knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law:" and again, "For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Rom. iii. 20. Gal. ii. 16. In opposition to a legal justification, he declares that of a believer in Christ to be invariably by grace: "Being justified freely by his *grace*:" "That being justified by his *grace*, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Rom. iii. 24. Tit. iii. 7.

But some may ask, whether justification by the deeds of the law, and by grace, cannot unite in the same individual. It is very manifest they cannot. There is nothing in the scriptures made plainer than this. Paul said to the Galatian professors, "Christ is become of none effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." They perhaps imagined they could combine the two systems together: but the apostle assured them they could not; since a justification by law was in such direct contrariety to a justification by grace, that an attempt to build themselves on the former, was in reality an abandonment of the latter.

It is agreeable to the common sense of mankind, that whatever is bestowed as a gratuity, cannot at the same time be considered as a merited reward. This sentiment is very accurately stated by the apostle in the following passage: "And if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." Rom. xi. 6. Where grace begins, work ends; and where work begins, there grace ends. They cannot both cover the same ground. If you give to the man, who has labored for you but half the day, what is equal to the wages of the whole day, half of it is the payment of a debt, and the rest is a gratuity. That which you pay him for his work is not grace; and what you bestow as a gift is no payment for his work. In pecuniary concerns, grace and debt may be intermingled, so that the same man may be both your *creditor* and your *beneficiary*. But it is not so in governmental affairs; certainly not under the perfect government of God. That man who needs grace or mercy at all, can not claim from the hand of God the least favor as being his due.

I think it can be no very difficult task to convince every candid mind, that the justification of the believer is, in no degree, by the *merit* of his faith or works, but wholly of *grace*. There are three distinct states,

belonging to every sinner who is saved by Jesus Christ, viz. his state of unregeneracy—of begun recovery from sin—and of perfect holiness in heaven. I shall now endeavor to show, that he is not justified by the merit of the good works he does in any one of these three states.

1. It is perfectly clear, he can not be justified for good works done in his state of *unregeneracy*. What are done in this period are all nothing but “dead works.” There is no moral excellence, nothing of the nature of holiness in one of them. The carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and not subject to his law, prevents the unregenerate from doing anything that is pleasing to God. Their sacrifices are an abomination to the Lord, and their ploughing is sin. Their most liberal offerings to the poor, and even their martyrdom, fail of meeting the divine approbation. See 1 Cor. xiii. 3. Their doings, including those which are most specious, are not only destitute of anything *meritorious*, but also of anything *acceptable*. God is angry with the wicked every day—every moment. Let them be doing what they will, so long as they retain a heart of enmity, they are children of wrath, having the wrath of God abiding on them continually.

By the account which Paul gives of himself, we learn that he once relied on the specious works of his unregenerate state, to procure his justification. But what he then counted gain, he afterwards counted loss; that is, the works on which he had entirely relied for justification, he now saw stood justly charged *against* him, as so many transgressions of the law, crying for vengeance on his guilty head. It is these specious works of our unregenerate state, works that are *entirely destitute of moral worth*, (since they are all the result of selfish motives,) which are most commonly relied on as being meritorious. These were the works on which the Pharisees made their whole dependence. They were ignorant of God’s righteousness, and went about to establish their own. Their ignorance of the spirituality of the divine law, led them to think highly of a mere outside cleansing, which left their hearts unholy, selfish, and proud. In this frame of mind they scorned to be saved by the righteousness of another.

2. The works which *are subsequent to regeneration, before the believer enters the world of glory*, do nothing to merit his acceptance with God. These, though radically different from those which preceded his renovation, are nevertheless so sinfully defective that they can neither make amends for the dead works of his unregenerate state, nor deserve a reward for themselves; for there is not one of all these good works that can sustain itself. Christians are not lessening their debt to divine justice, but continually augmenting it, so as to stand in need of more forgiveness than when they first believed. Perfect obedience does not rise above the reasonable claims which the Creator has on all his intelligent creatures—not only on such as have continued in their allegiance, but also on such as have revolted. Those revolters, therefore, who still, though renovated in mind, remain in some degree disaffected towards his character and government, must be continually increasing their desert of punishment. When they have a discovery of the holiness of God, and of their obligation to be in perfect conformity to his will, they are impelled to make this humiliating confession, “We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” Isa. lxiv. 6.



Paul renounced all his own righteousness, (as far as merit was respected,) not only that which belonged to him as a Pharisee, but also as a *Christian* : "That I may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law." Phil. iii. 9. This holy man made no more dependence on the merit of his faith, or any of those gracious affections which the Spirit of God had wrought upon his heart, than on the merit of his prayers and sermons, or any other external service he had performed. If the chief of the apostles, and the holiest of the saints, renounced all meritorious claims, then such claims must be renounced by all the redeemed family upon the earth.

3. The *perfect obedience of the saints in heaven*, will produce no change as to the ground of their justification ; it will then, and forever be by grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. As a proper understanding of the gracious justification of the saints in *heaven* will reflect much light on the whole subject, you will bear with me, should I detain you somewhat longer on this than on the other particulars.

Though holiness and sin are moral opposites, the one being as lovely as the other is hateful ; yet the one does not merit as much as the other demerits. A child who is blessed with the best of fathers, ought not to think highly of himself for rendering a cheerful and undeviating obedience to such a parent ; as though he had done some work of supererogation : but to disesteem and disregard such a parent must be an aggravated crime. That weight of parental character which seems to make it so peculiarly easy to render filial respect and obedience, should make it as peculiarly hard to be disrespectful and disobedient. Let this illustrate the matter which is now before us. Grant, it is as lovely to be grateful to the infinite Benefactor, as it is unlovely to be ungrateful ; still the one is not as well-deserving as the other is ill-deserving. We know it is a very amiable thing to love such a great and good Being as God is ; but to love him with all the heart and soul, is nothing more than our *duty*. His greatness and goodness increase the obligation to love, and, of course, the obligation to refrain from hating and despising him. The most perfect love and obedience do not therefore furnish the least cause for pride ; but a single transgression furnishes matter for everlasting humiliation.

The case of the servant, which is stated by our divine Teacher, in the seventeenth of Luke, will help us to understand the subject now before us. After representing him as serving his master faithfully, in the field and in the house, he puts this question : "Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him ?" To which he makes the following reply and application : "I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants ; we have done that which was our duty to do." In the case supposed, the servant, being the property of his master, his most faithful and unremitted services are considered to be nothing more than what is the master's *due*. And whatever opinion we may entertain concerning servitude, as existing among men, it is certain that, in the most absolute sense, intelligent creatures are the *servants* of God. Those who have rendered perfect and uninterrupted obedience, as in the case of the angels of light, have not

made him in the least degree their debtor. He is under no obligation to *thank* them for their obedience. In the sense of the passage referred to, *they* are unprofitable servants, having done no more than was their *duty* to do. They are *good* servants, and are treated as such; but all they have done, and are still doing, is nothing beyond their most imperious obligation; and is merely rendering to their infinitely glorious Sovereign his just dues. The apostle intimates, that if Abraham had been justified by works, he would have had no real cause for glorying *before God*. Rom. iv. 1.

Wherever God has connected the promise of everlasting blessedness with the *temporary* obedience of innocent creatures, it has been a favor altogether beyond their deserts, though not always of the nature of *mercy*; for its being mercy supposes the favor is not only beyond, but *contrary* to the deserts of those on whom it is conferred. Such a promise of durable felicity must necessarily imply, that an *obedient character* is also secured to those who are to enjoy it. It is a principle essential to the *law system*, that when the righteous man (or holy creature) turneth away from his righteousness, he shall thenceforth be treated according to his apostate character, as much as if he had never possessed any other; so that all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned. And it is wholly on the plan of grace, through an infinite atonement, that the wicked man who turns to God, has the promise that the transgressions he hath committed shall not be mentioned to him. Ezek. xviii. 21—24. While a creature's desert of God's favor extends not a moment beyond the continuance of his sinless obedience, the desert of his displeasure remains after he has broken off from his sins; and even after his freedom from the pollution of sin has been perfected. If we can feel guilty for the sins which were committed long ago, and for those sins of which we have already repented, (and the experience of every Christian will prove the possibility of this,) we can, no doubt, feel that we deserve punishment for the sins committed on earth, after we shall become confirmed in all the holiness of the heavenly state. It is true, after the saints are admitted to heaven, they will cease to augment their ill-desert; but that desert of punishment which they had incurred, during the period of their entire rebellion, and afterwards when their reconciliation was imperfect, will remain forever. Hence we conclude, their justification will never change its character; it will through eternal ages be of grace, not of works. As our guilt can not be diminished by our good doings, so neither can it be effected by our *sufferings*. He, who deserves an eternal punishment, can not lessen that desert by the endurance of sufferings which are temporary. The ill-desert of their sin has never been destroyed, nor diminished, by the severest sufferings which the children of God have endured in their own persons; nor was it destroyed or diminished by the sufferings of the Redeemer himself. It was far from being the object of His sufferings, to make the sins of his redeemed people appear less odious, or less deserving of the penalty of the law. Neither their good works, nor their sufferings; nor anything done or suffered by their Substitute, will ever efface from their minds a conviction of the demerit of their sin. David, in advanced life, prays, "Remember not the sins of my youth." On this petition the pious Henry

notes, "Our youthful faults and follies should be matter of our repentance and humiliation long after, because 'time does not wear out the guilt of sin.'" To this we may add, Nor will *eternity* wear it out.

"But do not the services of the redeemed in heaven, when these services are viewed by themselves, actually deserve to be accepted of God, as much as those of the angels who never sinned?" To this it may be replied; that the services of the redeemed, though not in themselves any more ill-deserving than those of the angels, are nevertheless to be considered as the services of *ill-deserving creatures*. It is true, they are now pardoned and perfectly sanctified; but they are not on that account any less deserving of punishment for the sins that have been already committed. Were they now to become disconnected from the Redeemer, and divested of his righteousness, the law would demand that they should be removed from their seats of bliss to the prison of hell. "No man," said the Son of God, "cometh unto the Father *but by me*." This will apply to the future as well as to the present world. The holy priesthood, in offering up their spiritual sacrifices, are accepted with God only through Jesus Christ. 1 Pet. ii. 5. Can creatures, concerning whom it will always be true, that they deserve the damnation of hell, ever have intercourse with a sin-hating and sin-punishing God, except through a Mediator?

The covenant, into which regeneration translates the elect, is wholly founded upon grace; and is, in the most unlimited sense, an *everlasting* covenant. They, who are once embraced within its promises, never revert to the covenant of works. The transition from works to grace is practicable; but from grace back to works is impossible. Nor does the covenant of grace change its nature, even when it has purged its subjects from the pollutions of sin, and placed them faultless and blameless before the throne of God in heaven. It is still sealed with blood, and is a mediatorial covenant, having a High Priest who ever liveth to make intercession. Heb. vii. 24—28. Though at the last day, Christ will surrender up that dominion over the universe at large, with which he was invested for the purpose of enabling him the more advantageously to prosecute the work of redemption, he will still remain the Head of the Church, reigning over the house of Jacob forever. Luke i. 33. The redeemed will always rest on Him, as the foundation of all their blessedness. Him they will praise for washing them from their sins in his own blood, and for making them kings and priests unto God. Nor will they ever cease to rely on his mediatorial merits and grace, in all their intercourse with God, through the ages of eternity. Rev. i. 5, 6.

The most important ingredient in justification, is the remission of deserved punishment. To remit a deserved punishment, is sometimes practised in human governments; but since gospel justification differs very materially from the dispensation of pardons among men, it may be useful to take notice of this difference.

1st. The dispensation of pardon in human governments has a tendency to endanger their stability; since it must of necessity be done without any proper atonement for the crimes that are pardoned. But under the divine government no pardons are dispensed in this absolute manner. Here it is an established maxim, that "Without shedding of



blood there is *no remission*." "God hath set forth his Son to be a propitiation to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Such an infinite propitiation for sin declares the righteousness of God, as the moral Governor of the world, with as much clearness and effect as is done by its punishment; so that he will appear to the whole intelligent creation a *just* God, at the same time that he is a Savior. Isa. xlv. 21. The examples of a free justification, comprehending the forgiveness of sins, are restricted to the children of Adam, for whose sin an atonement has been provided. What the law could not do, in that it had become weak, through man's apostacy, God has effected by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, not to make light of sin, but to condemn it in language as emphatic as God could utter. See Rom. viii. 3.

2dly. They who dispense pardons in human governments, can have no assurance, that the men whom they send back upon the community will not repeat their crimes, and even do worse than before. They can never know that their reformation is sincere, and therefore can not vouch for its permanency. But under the divine government, none are pardoned and accepted but such as have a radical change of character. "Whom he called, them he also justified." None except the regenerated are justified. While we remain in hostility against this government, we are always in a state of condemnation. On every unbeliever the wrath of God abides continually. John iii. 18. Until we return to him, he can not return to us. Mal. iii. 7.

3dly. Justification under the government of God differs from a pardon under the governments of men, in this respect; that it extends to all our misdemeanors, and excludes all future condemnation. He who receives a pardon from a ruler of this world, is forgiven some particular offense of which he is proved guilty; but this does not secure him against suffering death for other crimes; either such as have not yet been exposed, or such as he may hereafter commit. But the Supreme Ruler, who remembers all our wickedness, never forgives one of our sins, unless he forgives them all. And when he once forgives them, there is no more condemnation. It is his own promise, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember *no more*." Justification is unto *life*, i. e. life eternal. Heb. viii. 12; Rom. viii. 1, and v. 18. The justification of the gospel is something more than mere *forgiveness*, as this term is understood among men; it is the permanent reinstatement of a condemned rebel in the favor of his holy Sovereign, and in all the privileges of his great and everlasting kingdom.

A pardon dispensed under human governments, is, I believe, never called a *justification*; nor would there be the same propriety, as under the divine government, in giving it this name. Such an exercise of sovereignty among men is not termed *righteousness*. They who dispense pardons on earth may tell of their *clemency* and *mercy*; but they will not pretend that these are displays of *righteousness*. But while the pardons dispensed by the Supreme Ruler are merciful beyond all others; yet, in view of such extraordinary precautions as he has taken to prevent injury from accruing to his holy government, by their being dispensed, the terms *justification* and *righteousness*, in application to them, have great significancy. What Christ has done and suffered

for our salvation is, in a pre-eminent sense, "the righteousness of God"—"the righteousness of God, even our Savior Jesus Christ"—his "everlasting righteousness." Rom. iii. 21. 2 Pet. i. 1. Dan. ix. 24. It is righteousness in a sense superior to the moral law. When the apostle contrasts the two, he calls the law the ministration of death, and the atonement of Christ, applied by the Spirit, "the ministration of righteousness;" and tells us that it "exceeds in glory." It exceeds in glory, because it greatly augments the display of God's righteousness. While free justification and imputed righteousness do nothing to lower our views of the mercifulness of God in forgiving our sins, they represent the law as unrepealed, and the holiness of the Lawgiver as unsullied. They show us grace, reigning through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Some have thought that in the different parts of the sacred writings contradictory representations are given of the doctrine which is now under consideration. These apparent contradictions, however, all vanish by giving the subject a careful and unprejudiced examination. In the writings of the apostles there are *three justifications* spoken of, which all agree in one; and instead of being contradictory, serve to give us a more full and definite view of the doctrine. Justification is said to be, 1. By the redemption or righteousness of Christ: 2. By faith: 3. By works. Each of the three has its appropriate place in constituting the justification of the believer. The whole meritorious foundation, or procuring cause of justification, is the redemption or *righteousness of Christ*. Upon this only foundation of the sinner's hope we are placed by *faith*; and *good works* evidence the genuineness of our faith, and show on what foundation we are built. We may therefore say, concerning every man who is saved from the wrath to come, that he is justified in all these ways; that is, *meritoriously*, by the righteousness of Christ;—*instrumentally*, by faith;—and *evidentially*, by good works. If the words I use to distinguish the several branches of justification are not the most happily chosen, they will serve at least to mark that difference between them which manifestly exists. I will now refer you to passages of scripture which will show that this distinction is not a human invention.

(1.) The *meritorious* ground is exhibited in such passages as these: "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." Rom. iii. 24. "Much more, then, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." Rom. v. 9. "Even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." Rom. v. 18. "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. v. 21. This is that everlasting righteousness brought in by Messiah the prince, which is spoken of by Daniel the prophet. This is that righteousness of God that is by faith of Jesus Christ, which Paul contradistinguishes from the righteousness of the law; and on which he appears determined to place his whole dependence, in preference to trusting to any righteousness of his own. When he looked for a *foundation* on which to rest his hopes, he saw none other than Jesus Christ and him crucified. Every thing of his own, whether done before or after his conversion, appeared

wholly insufficient to constitute any part of the meritorious ground of his justification.

(2.) The *instrument* or means of justification is *faith*. As the hand is stretched forth to receive a proffered gift, so faith receives the righteousness of God our Savior. On this account we are said to be justified by *faith*; as appears in the following passages: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. v. 1. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law." Gal. ii. 16. "Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law." Rom. iii. 28. "Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Phil. iii. 9. "By grace are ye saved, through faith." Eph. ii. 8. These passages, while they show us that *faith* is necessary to justification, clearly distinguish it from that righteousness which is its foundation; just as the reception of the gift is to be distinguished from the gift itself. Faith goes out of itself, and receives that righteousness, and on that firm foundation builds all its hopes of heaven. Because justification is by faith, (which is an exercise of our own) it is none the less by grace that we are saved. The apostle declares, "Therefore it is of *faith*, that it might be by *grace*." Rom. iv. 16.

(3.) The *evidence* of justification is *good works*. Where these are not found in a professed believer, there is no justification in the sight of God; hence it is, that we are said to be justified (that is evidentially) by our works. As the tree is known to be good by its fruit, and as the body is known to be alive by breathing, pulsation, and voluntary motion; so is our faith proved to be genuine, even a faith which brings us into a state of justification before God, by its purifying the heart and life, and producing holy activity. In this sense it is, the apostle James asserts, that Abraham was justified by *works*, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar. "Show me," says the apostle, "thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." See James ii. 14—26. Because good works are necessary to prove our faith sincere, the apostle taught us that "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." *The faith of Jesus Christ, without the works of the law*, so much insisted on by Paul, is undoubtedly that holy faith, which, renouncing the righteousness of the law, depends entirely upon the atonement of Christ, as laying the whole foundation of the believer's acceptance with God; and *the faith without works*, condemned by James, is manifestly that which is merely intellectual, and proves itself to be destitute of a holy character, by its being unaccompanied with the fruits of righteousness. Both apostles believed that justification was an act of grace; and that there was no condemnation to them that were in Christ Jesus; and also, that such as were in Christ Jesus would walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Thus have we seen, that a free justification, through the righteousness or redemption of Christ, is a doctrine fully supported by the word of God. There is nothing in all the inspired volume that stands in



opposition to it. When Moses declares, *The man that doeth these things shall live by them*, he describeth the righteousness which is of the law. Rom. x. 5. And let us remember, when he describes this righteousness, he does not do it to induce us to trust in it for justification, but rather for the sake of convincing us of our absolute need of the righteousness of God that is without the law, and which is witnessed by the law and the prophets, even that which is by the faith of Jesus Christ.

“But do not the scriptures speak very explicitly of God’s rewarding the good works of his people; and of his doing it in such a way as to manifest his approbation of *their* character, as well as of that of their Redeemer?” They certainly do: but such a reward does not militate against the doctrine of a free justification; as will be seen by attending to the distinction they make between a reward of *debt* and a reward of *grace*. Rom. iv. 4. The reward of grace is as real a declaration of God’s approbation of the actions rewarded, as though it were granted under the covenant of works; and will therefore be as perfectly proportionate to the moral excellence of the individuals who are rewarded. The servant who gained ten pounds had authority given him over ten cities; and he who gained five pounds, over five cities. Luke xix. 17—19. But since they who receive the reward of grace are at the same time deserving an everlasting punishment for their evil deeds, they cannot *deserve* a reward of any kind. They must therefore always feel, that their being rewarded for their goodness, instead of being punished for their wickedness, is wholly of grace. And this reward, being a matter of grace, must of necessity be through the mediation of Christ, which is the appointed channel for all gracious communications to the children of men. Believers are accepted in the Beloved, and their sacrifices, when they are of an acceptable character, can be accepted of God only through his Son Jesus Christ. 1 Pet. ii. 5.

While the reward of debt can be claimed by no man, who had incurred the penalty of the law, which is wrath without mixture, the reward of grace may be claimed by such as would, if they had their just deserts, suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. It was on the foundation of grace, not of debt, that Nehemiah urged his plea to have his good deeds rewarded: “Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God.” Yet when this holy man took a retrospect of his whole life, the evil and the good, and compared his imperfect services with the perfect law of God, his plea is, *Spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy*. Neh. xiii. 14, 22. The very same persons who are rewarded for their good deeds, are spared from suffering eternal punishment, according to mercy, even the greatness of God’s mercy in Christ.

It has been shown that justification is subsequent to regeneration; so that no one is in a justified state, until he has become a new creature. I am aware, however, that there are some who consider this view of the doctrine as unscriptural. They think the apostle makes a different representation of the matter, when he says, “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith

is counted for righteousness. Rom. iv. 5. This passage, as they understand it, asserts that men are justified before they are converted, while they remain in a state of ungodliness: and some there are who imagine that the justification of believers is from eternity. There seems, however, to be no scriptural foundation for such a sentiment. If we are among the number, given to Christ before the foundation of the world, we are nevertheless, while continuing in unregeneracy, children of wrath, even as others; and are under condemnation as much as final reprobates. Eph. ii. 3. John iii. 18. There can be no more propriety in saying, the elect were justified from eternity, than in saying they were renewed from eternity. Both were from eternity in the divine plan, but have their actual existence in time; and it is the province of regeneration to go forward and prepare the way for justification.

But how shall we understand this opposing text? It concerns us first to ascertain what is meant by *ungodly*; for a right apprehension of the meaning of this word will prepare us to understand the whole passage. The justified are not here denominated the ungodly, to distinguish them from sinners who are in a converted state, but to distinguish them from those holy creatures who never needed conversion. Creatures, who have been recovered from a state of depravity, even when their recovery has become perfect, are still, in the view of the law, ungodly, in distinction from such as never departed from God. The law will always thus consider them; consequently their justification will never alter its character—they will never be justified as innocent, but as guilty creatures. In the passage which we are now considering, “the ungodly,” and “the man that worketh not,” is the same character; and yet the man that *worketh not* is said to *believe*. Now nothing can be more evident than this, that believing, in the sense of this text, is one of the fruits of regenerating grace. Faith (which is the same as believing,) “worketh by love”—“purifieth the heart”—“overcometh the world.” Faith is a holy exercise, that qualifies us to please God: but “they that are in the flesh can not please God.” *Not working* (which in this passage is contrasted with *believing*,) does not stand in opposition to renovated affections, and the consequent works of righteousness; but it implies, that in gospel justification, ceasing to depend on *the works of the law*, we rely wholly on the atonement of Christ.

But some will say, “If the elect remain in an unjustified state, having no union with Christ until after they are renewed, in what way do they receive the favor of regeneration? Is it not by virtue of a previous union with Christ, that they receive this renovating influence, and all other gifts requisite to their deliverance from the thralldom of sin?” To this I would reply; It is in consequence of the mediatorial interposition, that the race of Adam enjoy a new and merciful probation; that they enjoy the means of grace, the offers of salvation, and the influences of the Holy Spirit. These favors, which are enjoyed in common by those who are ordained unto eternal life and those who are not, come through the mediation and death of Christ; but they do not prove that any union exists between him and those on whom the favors are conferred. Regeneration comes to us through the sacrifice of Christ

and his intercession for transgressors ; but it evinces no antecedent union between him and the sinner who is the recipient of the favor ; for until it is received, no union can exist—" what concord hath Christ with Belial ? " Justification, then, must be subsequent to regeneration, though the latter is procured by the death of Christ, and is granted to sinful men wholly on his account. That renewing grace is given, in consideration of the mediatorial interposition in our behalf, is made evident by the following passage : " But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we had done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost ; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior : that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Tit. iii. 4—7. The whole mediatorial work is here shown to be an expression of God's kindness and love to man, especially that discriminating part, the washing of regeneration, effected by the power of the Holy Ghost. This influence, it is worthy to be noted, is shed on us *through Jesus Christ* : and immediately consequent upon this, we are justified by his grace, and made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

It is through the righteousness of Christ that we do, in the first instance, receive the gift of faith, even that precious faith, without which we can not be saved, and with which we can not be lost. Peter, in the beginning of his second epistle, thus addresses the Christians to whom he wrote : " To them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ." From this address it appears, it was through the Savior's righteousness they obtained the gift of faith ; but this is a gift of such a nature, that it must have been bestowed on them prior to their union with him, because faith is the very thing which constitutes that union.

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

That free justification by faith in the Redeemer's righteousness, which is the subject matter of this Article, is in sweet harmony with all the other parts of the system of revealed truth. Any other scheme of justification is at war with the whole gospel of Jesus Christ. We do not hesitate to say, that a mistake here is fundamental—it makes another gospel. So the matter was viewed by Paul, as is manifest by his epistle to the Galatians. See chap. i. 6—9.

There are none of our Articles with which this does not accord, and there are some with which its agreement is very apparent ; while with these every other plan of justification is seen to be perfectly at variance. Between this Article and the *third, fourth, and fifth* of the present series, the agreement is very manifest. The *third*, which exhibits the perfection of the law, in its injunctions and penalties, supposes a legal justification to be consistent, in case of a perfect unremitting obedience ; but in all other cases to be wholly inconsistent. Every attempt to make the law justify the creature, who has violated its precepts, is calculated to destroy its existence : " For it is written,



Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Gal. iii. 10. But in the *fourth* Article we are shown, that there is no man that has continued in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them : and therefore that there is no man who has not drawn upon himself the curse of the law. To suppose that he can extricate himself from the curse, by the merit of his own doings, would imply that an essential alteration had been made in the structure of the law. But in the *fifth* Article we see the mercy of God providing another righteousness for fallen creatures, entirely distinct from their own ; and yet exerting an influence no less salutary and effectual in support of divine government, than that which would have been exerted by their own personal obedience to the precept, or personal sufferings under the penalty of the law.

Now it is manifest that a *legal* justification, for the sake of any good works which may have been done by a transgressor, would be nothing less than a destruction of the law ; but a *free* justification, for the sake of that infinite Personage, who, by obeying and suffering, honored the law and condemned transgression, has no tendency to destroy the law, but to confirm it. "Do we then make void the law through faith?" (that is, through justification by faith,) "God forbid : yea, we establish the law." Rom. iii. 31. The justification of apostate creatures by a law righteousness, would effect a destruction of the law : and it is certain that such a mode of justification would render nugatory the death of Christ : "For if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." Gal. ii. 21. See also chap. iii. 21. If sinners can still be saved without the Redeemer's righteousness, his agony in the garden, and his sufferings on the cross, would appear to be nothing but a solemn farce. Redemption is every where in the scriptures represented as the chief of the works of God : but the man who seeks to save himself by the works of the law, refusing to submit to the righteousness of God, which he has wrought out by the death of his Son, practically says, *he* can make a better righteousness than God's. Such a man would not insult his Maker more, were he to assume state to himself, and say, "I can originate a better creation than God's—he need not have made a world for me ; I could have done better for myself."

The justification of penitent believers, through the atonement of Christ, is in such perfect harmony with the spirit of the law, that creatures justified by the righteousness of the law, and those by the righteousness of faith, will compose one harmonious society in heaven. See Rev. v. 9—12. Those of the children of men who are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, and, in this way, admitted to a full and everlasting enjoyment of God, will have no undervaluing thoughts of the law : nor will those holy angels, who stand by the righteousness of works, have any undervaluing thoughts of the righteousness of faith ; they will even help the saints in their anthems of praise to their Redeemer. Justification by works, that is, by personal righteousness, in the case of those who have never sinned ; and justification by grace, that is, through the righteousness of another, in the case of those sinners who have put their trust in the great Magnifier of the law, are systems of acceptance with God which widely differ ; and yet they

are sweetly harmonious. The society of heaven, by being composed of these two classes of God's friends, will no doubt be rendered more interesting and delightful, than if all its inhabitants were of one class. But if some of *our race*, fallen as we are, were to be admitted into this society by virtue of their own good works, it would be altogether unharmonious. Self-righteous pharisees could neither sing the song of angels, nor the song of the redeemed. No songs are heard in the New Jerusalem in which they could possibly unite.

This Article is in harmony with the *first* and *second* of the series, which exhibit an infinitely great and holy Being, displaying his glory in his works. And in forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, through the mediation of his well beloved Son, his glory is displayed to the best advantage. Here "mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth springs out of the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven." We see the holy Governor of the world, taking off the sentence of condemnation from such as have returned from their revolt, and accepted the punishment of their sins: and we hear him proclaiming an eternal amnesty in their favor. In this he appears at the same time glorious in holiness, and glorious in grace. Mercy, it is true, rejoiceth against judgment in the pardon of the ill-deserving; yet justice is by no means trampled in the dust, but is vindicated more gloriously than when sinning angels were cast down to hell.

The *sixth* and *seventh* Articles contain nothing in opposition to this; and in the *eighth* we learn by what means it is, that any of our apostate race become prepared for justification. Among totally depraved creatures, like ourselves, none would ever be prepared to be justified, were it not for the renewing of the Holy Ghost. "Whom he called, them he also justified." These, and none others, are justified; for they alone are prepared to feel their ill-desert, and to receive a free pardon for His sake, who condemned their sins by bearing them in his own body on the tree.

The two Articles that immediately precede the one we are now considering, relate to the *grace* which God displays in the regeneration of the men whom he saves—grace by which he distinguishes them from their fellow men, both in his *operations* and *counsels*. All the doctrines of grace harmonize; grace in election, in renovation, in forgiveness. The apostle viewed the relation between predestination and justification to be so intimate, as to need but one connecting link to bring them together: "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified." A state of condemnation can not be succeeded by a state of justification, until the dominion of sin be broken up; therefore it is, that as many as are ordained to eternal life, are predestinated to a conformity to the image of Christ.

There are none of those, that adopt the doctrine of sovereign distinguishing grace in the sinner's conversion, who will reject the doctrine of a free and gratuitous justification. If we believe that we are wholly indebted to grace for the atonement, and for a heart to embrace it, we can never believe that we are justified by works, or rewarded for personal merit. Between such sentiments there would be no con-

cord. If grace begins our salvation, it must finish it ; if it renews our hearts, it must have the honor of justifying our persons. The two gifts are wholly gracious : but there is this difference ; regeneration is necessarily an unpromised gift, because the unregenerate possess no goodness of character upon which the promise could fix ; but in regeneration goodness of character is imparted : “ That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” The Spirit, in transforming the heart, prepares us to be accepted in the Beloved : for God can be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

#### REMARKS.

1. With this Article before us, we discover an important distinction between works that are *acceptable*, and such as are *meritorious*. In unregeneracy, none of our works are either meritorious or acceptable. But as soon as there is any transformation of character, they become in a degree acceptable ; and will ultimately become entirely so. Whatever of holiness appears in these works, is none the less acceptable on account of its having been preceded by sin ; or on account of its now being intermingled with it. Holiness is always lovely, wherever it is found. Nor are the good works of renewed sinners any less acceptable to God, because they are the result of his immediate influence on their hearts. Our most entire dependence on the Spirit of God for our goodness, does nothing to diminish its amiableness in his sight ; nor are we on this account considered as any less worthy of his regard. But as to *merit*, it is wholly excluded, not only from the works which precede regeneration, but from those which follow it ; even after those works shall have become perfect : for no creature who deserves the pains of hell, or evil only, (as does every transgressor of God’s law,) can at the same time deserve heaven, or any other good.

2. The light reflected by this Article will expose their mistake, who say, “ If you deny *total* depravity, you can see no need of a Savior.” To see our need of the Holy Ghost to renew our hearts, we must be convinced that they are *totally* depraved ; but if they are depraved *at all*, we need the benefits of the atonement ; we need to be justified freely through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ ; for this is the tenor of the law, “ Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” I do not pretend that sinners will ever go to Jesus Christ for justification, till they become convinced that their depravity is entire ; but did they apprehend things aright, they would see that the least delinquency rendered a legal justification impossible, and a Savior’s righteousness their only hope.

3. With the doctrine of justification in view, we perceive it must be of vital importance rightly to understand *the law*. Through a misconception of its structure and design, Paul, while zealously engaged in the externals of religion, had well nigh lost his soul. It was by a correction of this mistake, that he became convinced he needed a better righteousness than his own. Let us hear his own account of the matter : “ For I was alive without the law once ; but when the command-



ment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." Rom. vii. 9, 10. Again he says, "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." In the case of the apostle, we learn both the meaning and importance of a *law work*. That convert who is experimentally ignorant of such a work, has reason to fear that he is yet under the curse of the law. If he has not through the law become dead to the law, he has not yet begun to live unto God.

4. With this fundamental doctrine before us, it is easy to see, that nothing stands more in the way of the salvation of lost men, than a spirit of *self righteousness*. This was what ruined that generation of God's covenant people who lived at the time of Christ's advent. "But Israel," said the apostle, "which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." Rom. ix. 31, 32. God has provided a righteousness for sinners, even for the chief of sinners: therefore it is not our being *sinners* that renders our case hopeless; but it is that proud legal spirit, which will sooner traverse the globe to establish its own righteousness, than submit to the righteousness of God. The conversion of publicans into pharisees does nothing towards preparing them for the kingdom of heaven. Sinners must renounce their *self-righteousness* as well as their *vices*, else they cannot be saved.

5. Lest some should imagine, that this free justification must exert an influence to relax the bonds of divine government, it may be well to notice; that it was never proposed to innocent creatures, as if they had their choice given them, whether to be saved by obedience to the law, or by a free justification. It was not made known until the penalty of the law was incurred. And it is now proffered to no apostates, except those for whom a law-honoring atonement has been provided. Nor even of such do any become released from their state of condemnation, until they are cordially reconciled to God and his holy government. A time is limited for this reconciliation to take place; and proclamation is made, that this way of effecting the reconciliation of apostates, is the last expedient which the God of grace will ever provide for this, or any other part of his moral kingdom. This plan of justification can not be charged with having brought about the defection of men or angels. And surely none can pretend that it is the cause of that iniquity with which the earth is deluged. On the contrary, it manifestly does more than anything else to roll back the destructive tide; for if among our fallen race there be any who depart from iniquity, it is those who through the law have become dead to the law—those who have renounced their own righteousness for that of their divine Savior.

## ARTICLE XII.

THERE IS AN INFALLIBLE CONNECTION BETWEEN BEING JUSTIFIED ON EARTH, AND GLORIFIED IN HEAVEN ; OR, IN OTHER WORDS, ALL REAL SAINTS WILL PERSEVERE IN HOLINESS TO THE END OF LIFE.

It is one of the most fundamental truths of God's word, That all those who are renewed by the Holy Ghost, and justified through the redemption there is in Christ, will be enabled to persevere in the way of holiness unto the end of life, and afterwards be received to glory. It is made as certain that the *justified* will be received to glory, as that the *called* will be justified ; or that the *predestinated* will be called. These are all such things as God has joined together ; for "whom he did predestinate, them he also called ; and whom he called, them he also justified ; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Rom. viii. 30.

This doctrine implies something more than a certainty, that all true saints will gain admission into the kingdom of heaven ; it includes a certainty of their perseverance in believing and obeying the truth, to the very end of their days. They are chosen to salvation, but with no more fixedness in the divine purpose, than they are to a sanctification of the Spirit and a belief of the truth. And they are ordained, not only to commence a life of piety, but to go and bring forth fruit, and that their *fruit should remain*. 2 Thess. ii. 13. John xv. 16. As the Orthodox do not believe in an election which will raise men to heaven without a radical change of character ; so neither do they believe in a perseverance, which does not imply a permanence in the renovated character, and a continuance in well-doing. In confirmation of the doctrine of the saints' perseverance, I will suggest some of the leading arguments which to my own mind have appeared satisfactory.

1. The thing is *possible*. It is possible, not only because it is within the compass of God's power, but also of his consistent operations. It is what he *can* and *may* do. The covenant of works made no provision for recovery from apostacy, even when but a single offense had been committed ; but in the covenant of grace a provision of this sort is made without doing the least injury to the law, While this, as well as that, forbids all sin, this, in distinction from that, provides for its forgiveness. The two covenants appear to have been both in the view of David, when he said, "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, (according to the covenant of works,) O Lord, who shall stand ? But there is forgiveness with thee, (according to the covenant of grace,) that thou mayest be feared." Ps. cxxx. 3, 4. He saw that such was his own imperfection, and such the imperfection of all the saints on earth, that, in case their iniquities had been marked against them, according to the tenor of the covenant of works, they could not stand ; nor could their intercourse with God have been kept up for a

single day. His firm belief that his iniquities were forgiven, and not marked, appears to have been the thing which emboldened him to continue his approaches to the throne of grace. It is certainly possible that the same Divine Agent, who has begun a good work in the saints, should perform it until the day of Jesus Christ : for he can work in them both to will and to do. Phil. i. 6, and ii. 13. The same power that can raise the dead sinner, can quicken the languishing saint : and the latter is as consistent a display of divine power as the former. How often, in the 119th Psalm, does holy David ask the favor of quickening grace : “Quicken me according to thy word :” “Quicken me in thy righteousness :” “Quicken me after thy loving kindness.” In the last verse of this Psalm he acknowledges he had gone astray like a lost sheep ; and as such he prayed his Shepherd to look after him, and bring him back to the fold. Such an acknowledgment and petition are in the spirit of that new covenant, in which believers are all interested. One of the chief blessings contained in this covenant, is an effectual healing for our backslidings. Hos. xiv. 4.

What I particularly wish to establish by the present argument is this ; that such is the nature of the covenant of grace, there is nothing which makes it inconsistent for God (should he see fit to do it,) to preserve from fatal apostacy the whole family of his new born sons and daughters. It would not be any infraction upon his law, nor would it be any way inconsistent with his holiness, should *his mercy endure forever* ; not only in extending forgiveness to them whenever they repent, but also in giving them repentance whenever they sin.

2. There are *divine promises*, which infallibly secure the saints’ perseverance to the end of life. Promises of this nature are found, both in the *covenant of redemption*, and in the *covenant of grace*.

First. In the *covenant of redemption*. In this covenant the parties are none other than *the Persons of the Godhead*. It was made before the foundation of the world, and relates to our redemption from sin and hell by the atonement of Christ. Now if it can be shown, that this covenant contains promises which insure the salvation of those who are united to Christ, it will prove the point in question : for it is certain that such Covenanters will not fail to fulfill their engagements. The confidence which the apostle had, that he should at length enjoy the heavenly inheritance, was strengthened by a view of this early covenant : “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.” Tit. i. 2. God made no promise to *Paul* before the world began, but he then made a promise to his *Redeemer* in relation to him ; which was developed at the time of his conversion. The grace which he now received was, in a sense, given him in Christ Jesus before the world began. 2 Tim. i. 9.

In the covenant of redemption, the Father promised to reward his Son for his obedience unto death. Isa. liii. 12. On the fulfillment of this promise the Son made an entire dependence. He said, “All the Father giveth me shall come to me.” Nor was there any less certainty that the Son would fulfill his engagement, in their reception and preservation ; for he says, “And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” He then proceeds to a further disclosure of the stipulations of this eternal covenant : “For I came down from heaven, not



to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me ; that of all he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life ; and I will raise him up at the last day." John vi. 37—40. Here the Son of God tells us, that he came to do the will of his Father ; he also informs us, it was his Father's will, that, of those who were given to him and believed on him, he should lose none, but raise them up at the last day ; that is, that he should perfect their salvation to its last and finishing stroke. In this covenant the Holy Spirit has a part. He engages to make a saving revelation of the Son to such as the Father has given him, and thenceforth to abide in them forever. See John xiv. 16, 17, and xvi. 7—15. 2 Tim. i. 14.

What we term the covenant of redemption is, I think, clearly revealed in the scriptures ; and is it not evident, that its conditions can not be performed by the three Divine Persons, without effecting the everlasting salvation of every one who becomes a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ ? It is true, that in this covenant there are no promises made to believers themselves : but there are promises in relation to them, which can not be kept without securing their perseverance in holiness unto eternal life. The promises the Lord made to David concerning his Son, gave the same security for the prosperous reign of Solomon, which was afterwards given by the promise made immediately to Solomon himself. If the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has promised his Son, that his spiritual seed, when they break his laws, shall be chastised and reclaimed, but not disinherited, it must secure their permanent standing in the covenant, as completely as if the promises were made to themselves. Ps. lxxxix. 28—37.

Secondly. The covenant of *grace* secures the saints' perseverance. This exists between *God* and *men*. It embraces all those who have returned unto God through Jesus Christ. To them God has made promises which insure their perseverance to the end of life ; and these promises are all confirmed in Christ. The covenant of *grace*, made with believers, is the exact counterpart of the covenant of redemption, which had before been made with Christ concerning them. The covenant with the father of the faithful is declared to have been confirmed of God in *Christ*. He is the *surety* of the covenant which God makes with us. The promises are made to us through Him ; hence it is they can be depended on : for in Him they are all yea and amen, unto the glory of God. Heb. vii. 22. 2 Cor. i. 20.

The promises of God to his children are of two sorts, namely, such as relate to his approbation of their renovated character ; and such as secure the preservation of that character, and also its progressive improvement. He engages not only to hear their humble prayers, but also to *prepare* their hearts to pray. Ps. x. 17. He promises not only to reward their fruitfulness, but also to render them increasingly fruitful. John xv. 2. He promises a crown to such as overcome, and also victory to all who are truly engaged in the Christian warfare. Satan is at the head of the opposition ; and yet the soldiers of Christ are assured of their victory over him : "And the God of peace shall bruise

Satan under your feet shortly." Rom. xvi. 20. What a support, in this ensnaring world, is such a promise as this, which I will now repeat : " But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able ; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." 1 Cor. x. 13. Had the covenant of works contained such a promise, the fall of man would have been rendered impossible : for it would have been an ample security against all the seductive influence of the tempter. And to them who are interested in the covenant of grace, such a promise must imply an engagement, either that they shall be kept from being assailed by temptation, or be strengthened wholly to resist its influence, or have help to recover themselves from the snare into which they have been drawn.

There is scarcely anything on earth which more endangers the perseverance of the saints, than false teachers. Christ himself, speaking of their baneful influence, says, " They shall deceive, if it were possible, the very elect." But it is not possible, because God has made a promise to secure them against this evil. " These things (says the apostle John) have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you," i. e. as an effectual preventive against their seductions. 1 John, ii. 26, 27.

The afflictions with which the people of God are visited are called *temptations*, since they seem to jeopardize their religion ; but it is declared, that to take away sin, is the fruit, yea, all the fruit which they shall produce. See Isa. xxvii. 9. The apostle represents God as always chastising his children for their profit, to make them partakers of his holiness. Heb. xii. 10. In another place he says, " We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." Rom. viii. 28. But should any event, or series of events, so operate as to cause an eternal separation between them and their Saviour, and place them back in the enemy's hands, these would be infinitely far from working for their good.

Were the perseverance of the saints to depend on their own sufficiency, either inherent or acquired, it would be precarious indeed ; but if the all-sufficient God has promised to bestow that grace which is necessary to insure their continuance in well doing, they are safe. On this promised grace they rely. This, and this alone, was the thing on which Paul relied, though he probably had more holiness than any other man living. When under a sore trial he besought the Lord to be delivered from it, but he received this answer, " My grace is sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." With this assurance he declares himself satisfied : " Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." 2 Cor. xii. 9. With his regenerated people God makes an everlasting covenant that he will not turn away from them to do them good, but that he will put his fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from him. Jer. xxxii. 40. If their perseverance in holiness were the very thing, concerning which he intended to give them security, how could he have made a promise more directly to the purpose ? It is the Almighty God, the God of truth who says, " I will put my fear in their hearts," (the very place where it needs to be) " that they shall not depart from me."

Christians, as they are in themselves, make but a feeble flock; but they have a shepherd whose grace and strength are infinite. And he has said, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." John x. 28. "But may not this promise be kept, and yet some of them perish by plucking *themselves* out of his hand?" To this it may be replied; There never could be any other possible way, by which an invading foe could succeed in effecting their apostacy, but by gaining their consent. If, then, the promise, "Neither shall any pluck them out of my hand," contains in it no security against their being so seduced as to give their consent to forsake their shepherd, it amounts to just nothing. We know that the righteous, in order to reach the promised land, must hold on their way; that they must keep their hearts with all diligence; and keep themselves in the love of God. And the good Shepherd, who is the keeper of Israel, has engaged for them that they shall do all this. They are kept by the power of God through faith (which is a voluntary exercise of their own) unto salvation. The power of God is employed in preserving and strengthening that faith by which, as *Christians*, they live and move and have their being.

If the promises which have been referred to (and many others of a like nature might be introduced,) do not secure the perseverance of those who are brought into the bonds of the new covenant, how could any be made strong enough to do it? Such promises as these make it evident, that God was willing to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel concerning their salvation, that they might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them. Heb. vi. 17, 18.

3. The *historical account* which the scriptures give us of "the generation of God's children," helps confirm us in the belief of the saints' perseverance. They who are there spoken of as once becoming the children of God, seem to have retained their place in his holy family through all the vicissitudes of life. Though none of them are represented as spotless characters; yet they all endured to the end. Some of them were guilty of flagrant offences; yet they arose from their falls, held on their way, and died in the Lord. And to this agree the words of that inspired proverb, "A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again." Prov. xxiv. 16. In the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, the apostle begins to give us a catalogue of Old Testament believers, which he tells us time would have failed him, had he attempted to fill it up; and it is evident he speaks of them all as men, whose faith did not fail, even to the last. They *all died in faith*. Enoch and Noah walked with God all the while they remained on the earth. So did Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Caleb, Joshua, Samuel, David, and the whole company of Bible saints.

Such a uniformity in the perseverance of those saints, whose history is given by the pen of inspiration, is certainly calculated to induce the belief that the holy character of the children of God, though not perfect is nevertheless *permanent*. It very naturally leads us to conclude, that the covenant which God has established with them, has provided for the preservation and improvement of their renovated character.

4. The perseverance of all *real saints*, may be conclusively inferred



from the reason which the scriptures assign, why all *professed saints* do not persevere ; namely, some original defect in their religion. They are represented as uncircumcised in heart, when they were circumcised in the flesh ; and as not having their heart right with God, even at the time when they sought him and inquired early after him. They are represented as building their house without any foundation ; as taking no root in the ground, even when they seem to have an upward growth ; as having a lamp without even taking any oil ; and as coming to the wedding without the wedding garment. To all those who shall be on the left hand of the Judge at the last day, and who shall claim his favor on the ground of the relation which subsisted between Him and them in the present world, he will return one answer, “*I never knew you ; depart from me ye that work iniquity.*” When any of the visible church apostatize to infidelity, damnable heresies, or any other course of wickedness, the scripture gives this concise reason for it, *But they were not of us.* If we are told of heretics whose word has eaten like a canker, and which has overthrown the faith of some, our minds are immediately relieved with the assurance, that the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. Ps. lxxviii. 37. Luke vi. 49. Matt. xiii. 20, 21; xxv. 3; xxii. 11; vii. 23. 1 John ii. 19. 2 Tim. ii. 19.

5. The instructions of Christ, solemnly enjoining upon us *such an entrance on our religious course, as to insure its continuance*, proves that there is an established connexion between beginning right, and holding out to the end. He advises, as we are entering on a life of religion, that we should imitate that prudent man, who, before he begins a building, examines into the state of his funds, to determine whether he has sufficient to finish it. Nor does our divine teacher leave us, without giving us the needed information on this interesting point ; he tells us what it will cost to finish the spiritual building which he would have us undertake : “*So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he can not be my disciple.*” Self-denial and supreme love to Christ are the lowest conditions of discipleship ; and we are here taught that no one, whose religion has such a basis, will fail of enduring to the end ; that no one, who thus begins to build, will be disgraced for not being able to finish. Luke xiv. 25—33.

6. An argument of some weight, in establishing the doctrine of this Article, is derived from *the resemblance which the scriptures trace between the headship of the first and second Adam.* Paul informs us that the first Adam was a figure (a type) of him that was to come. Rom. v. 14. In the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, Adam is called the “*first man,*” and Christ the “*second man,*” and the “*last Adam.*” Christ is represented to be the head of his redeemed family, as Adam was of the human race. Now it is evident, that on the conduct of the first Adam depended, according to the tenor of the original covenant, the character and state of his whole race. His fidelity and persevering obedience during his term of trial, would have secured the obedient character and consequent blessedness of his posterity. Now all who are regenerated and justified, have become members of the spiritual body of Christ. And may we not from analogy reason thus : Since the fidelity of the first Adam would have secured

the unfailing obedience of all his children, the fidelity of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, must secure to all his spiritual children the continuance and final perfection of that obedient character, which he has graciously imparted to them? Had the first Adam been able at the close of his probation, to say to his unborn posterity, *I live*, he might have added, *ye shall live also*. But the second Adam was able to say to the children of his love, "Because I live, ye shall live also:" and this he did say. John xiv. 19.

Some may demand proof of what is here taken for granted, viz: *That the obedience of Adam would have secured an obedient character to his posterity*. In support of this commonly received sentiment, I shall offer two reasons.

1st. This view of the covenant with Adam makes it self-consistent; that is, its two sides agree together. It would be unnatural, that our first father's failing to keep covenant, should entail on us a depraved character; without supposing, that his faithfulness to the covenant would have produced a contrary effect. It would seem to implicate the benevolence of the Creator, to suppose that the good which was promised, had relation to none but himself; and that the evil which was threatened, comprehended his posterity. If the threat, *Thou shalt surely die*, was addressed to him as the father of mankind, the implied promise, *Thou shalt live*, must also have extended to them.

2dly. God's covenant transactions with other parents, since the fall, together with the promises and threatenings which relate to our offspring, are calculated to confirm us in the sentiment that Adam's obedience to the first covenant would have secured his race from apostacy. When God threatens to visit the iniquity of those who hate him upon their children, he promises to show mercy to the generations of those who love him and keep his commandments. While he says to the wicked, "Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body," he promises the righteous that the fruit of their body shall be blessed. Deut. xxviii. 4, 18. And the providences of God have often been of such a nature as to verify these declarations of his word. And when these declarations and providences are viewed in connexion, they reflect much light on the covenant which was made with our first parents; and they serve to show, that their conduct, whether *good* or *bad*, was designed to stamp the character of all their unborn generations.

I would now ask, Has not the doctrine of this Article been shown to be contained in the word of God? If it has, then the word of God contains no doctrine which is in contrariety to it. If there be a single text, which undeniably teaches the certain perseverance of all those who are once brought within the bonds of the new covenant, we may be sure there is not a single text against it. "Not a single text against it!" some may exclaim with surprise: as if the writer were uncandid to suppose all the scripture on his own side. But is it not clear if there be in reality a single passage against it, there can be none for it? Is the scripture of truth divided?

The plan of this work will not permit me to stop, to give a particular explanation of all the passages, which have been considered as standing opposed to the doctrine in question. Most of these, however, are comprehended under *three classes*, to each of which some attention will now be given.

The *first* class of texts which I shall introduce, are those which suspend the blessedness of believers on their *enduring to the end*. The Savior says, "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Matt. xxiv. 13. Similar to this is the declaration of the apostle, "To present you holy and unblamable and unproveable in his sight, if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel." Col. i. 22, 23. Texts of this class prove unquestionably, that perseverance in faith and good works, is absolutely necessary to insure an admission into the kingdom of heaven. And yet there is nothing in them which asserts that any true converts will fail to persevere.

"But why, it will be asked, does the promise contain the conditional clause, *if ye continue in the faith*, in case that such continuance is uniform?" A very good reason can be assigned for it. Divine wisdom sees it to be better, in the present state, to describe God's chosen people by their appropriate *character*, than by their *names*; and this is revealed to be one essential ingredient in their character, that they continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel. A work of grace can not be commenced in their hearts, short of their drinking of the water of which Christ spake to the woman of Samaria: and yet when this is once drunk, it uniformly becomes a well of living water, springing up into everlasting life. They can not in a spiritual sense, become rich at all, except they buy of Christ, that *gold which is tried in the fire*; and they who have this can never become poor, because it will endure to the end; there is no furnace which will consume it. When the Lord promises a crown of life to such as are faithful unto death, it is the same as to promise it to all those who are now his real friends; for all such will be faithful unto death: and their faithfulness unto death is the grand proof of a right outset in their Christian course.

These remarks will serve to show the fallacy of an objection which is often made against this doctrine, as though its tendency was to relax our endeavors to persevere in holy living. If we have understood the doctrine aright, a relaxation of our endeavors to persevere, must always diminish the evidence of the genuineness of our religion, and, of course, of the reality of our conversion.

A *second* class of texts are such as speak of apostacy as an evil, to which the whole church of Christ is *actually* exposed. Of this class, these which follow, may serve for an example: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." "Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." "Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Heb. iii. 12; iv. 11: x. 38. In view of these and other passages of the like import, I would remark; it is not pretended that there is no danger of apostacy in the church of Christ. It is granted there is danger of that which is partial, and also of that which is total and ruinous: real Christians are in danger of partial apostacy, and false professors of utterly renouncing their profession. If such danger exists, it is altogether proper it should be expressed by cautions, such as those which have been cited. And since the names of the true converts are



not disclosed, *they*, in common with others, receive the caution. All are admonished to see to it, that they are not wanting in that evidence of grace which is derived from a perseverance to the end of life. Such admonitions oblige those who are mere professors, to become what they profess, and they oblige real converts to make their calling and election sure. Every one is put on his guard against backsliding, and all those defections which indicate an unsoundness in their religion.

I will not say that real saints are not, in themselves considered, in danger of even final apostacy. There is nothing in themselves, though they are now recovered from the hand of the enemy, which makes it impossible for them to be brought under again, and even to be held in perpetual bondage. This is true, and it is what they ought most sensibly to feel. The believer, in view of his own personal insufficiency and great exposedness, is required to work out his salvation with fear and trembling, and yet at the same time, in view of the gracious promises and all-sufficiency of **JEHOVAH**, he need not hesitate to say, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence, I shall not be moved." Thus the believer, viewed by *himself*, is greatly exposed to utter destruction; while in *God* he is perfectly secure.

This matter may be happily illustrated by the natural exposedness, and yet perfect security of the ark, that immense ship which was built by divine appointment, to preserve the chosen family from being destroyed by the flood. The ark, in itself considered, was exposed to the same disasters as other floating vessels. But is there a Christian in the world, who supposes there was anything really doubtful concerning the safety of those who entered the ark? It was a method devised by God himself, on purpose "to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth." When they had entered this asylum, *the Lord* himself *shut them in*. As soon as they were enclosed in the ark, the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened, and the ark floated upon the surface of this shoreless sea. We are now naturally led to contemplate this deeply laden vessel, as being in a state of great exposure, and yet of perfect safety. We seem to see that Almighty Being, who directed it to be built for such an important purpose, watching over it every moment, guiding all its motions, and averting all impending evils, until he causes it safely to rest on the mountains of Ararat. Here was great exposure on the one hand, and perfect security on the other. And thus it is with every one who has entered the Ark of safety, the antitype of that which preserved the family of Noah from the destruction which came on the old world. Many are the afflictions and temptations of the righteous. They are exposed to the wiles of the devil, the seductions of wicked men, and the powerful lustings of indwelling sin. They have many hair-breadth escapes from ruin. The righteous are scarcely saved: and yet they are all actually saved. Like that exposed company who shared with Paul in the perils of shipwreck, they all escape safe to land.

A *third* class of texts are such as give an account of *instances of apostacy which have actually existed*. The names of a number of apostates are put on record, as so many beacons to warn others against falling after the same example of unbelief. In this monitory list are

the names of king Saul, Alithophel, Judas Iscariot, Simon Magus, Hymeneus, and Philetus, and others with them. It is granted that these men apostatized from the church of God. But we have already seen that the scriptures account for such apostacies, by supposing some latent corruption, inconsistent with godly sincerity, to have had a previous dominion over them. They lead us to believe, that all these, who went out from the church of God, were not among its holy members, even when they were visibly in fellowship with them: and they lead us to believe, that when the faith of these men was overthrown, *their* foundation remained unshaken whom *the Lord knew to be his*. 1 John, ii. 19. 2 Tim. ii. 19.

The passages comprehended under these three classes can be seen to be both true and important, in consistency with the doctrine of the certain perseverance of the saints: but if their perseverance be not certain, no consistent interpretation can be given to those passages which were previously introduced to support the doctrine.

It is easy to see how God should make a continuance in well-doing, the necessary condition of glorification; and at the same time secure grace to every one whose life is hid with Christ: but we can not see how he can promise to secure that grace, and yet suffer any of its subjects to fail of salvation. God is not, in the very nature of things, under obligation to keep the saints from falling, any more than he was to prevent the fall of Adam or of the angels; but when he has made an everlasting covenant with them, even the sure mercies of David; and when he has promised to put his fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from him, we do not see how he can keep such a covenant, and verify such a promise, and yet suffer them to depart from him. We can also see how all such as are possessed of a principle of holiness may be infallibly preserved from a final apostacy, notwithstanding it is said, "When the righteous man doth turn from his righteousness and commit iniquity, he shall die." This may be an impossible case, introduced for an important purpose, like that of the apostle in his epistle to the Galatians, where he makes the supposition of an angel preaching a false gospel. Gal. i. 8. Or the righteous man, who turns from his righteousness, may be nothing more than one who turns from the appearance and profession of righteousness, like those described 1 John, ii. 19. Men are sometimes called by names they have assumed, or that others have applied to them, but which do not designate their real character. Thus Hananiah is called a *prophet*, and our Savior a *malefactor*; yet Hananiah was not a real prophet, nor was Christ a real malefactor. Jer. xxviii. 10. Luke xxiii. 32.\*

\* The Bible, which has been most familiar to me for almost forty years, was printed at Edinburg by Alexander Kincaid, his Majesty's Printer, in the year 1766. In this edition of the Bible, Luke xxiii. 32, reads thus: "And there were also two other malefactors led with him to be put to death." I have also a pocket Testament which has been in my possession nearly as long; and this has the same reading as the Bible. This appears to be a correct translation of the Greek, as it stands in those Testaments which I have examined. The pause between the adjective and the substantive, which appears in the late editions of the English Bible, is not found. With such means as I now possess to enable me to ascertain what is the true reading, I am led to believe that the English translation, which is now common, viz. "two others, malefactors," instead of "two other malefactors," is incorrect. Is there not reason to conclude that the spirit of inspiration guided the Evangelist to the choice of an expression, which would show not only the light in which Christ was viewed by those who wickedly put him to death;

But it may here be asked, How can a threatening be denounced against a man for falling away from a righteousness, which would not have saved him if he had continued in it? It does not follow because a threatening is denounced against the man who becomes an apostate, that he would have been saved in case he had not apostatized, any more than the threatening which excludes drunkards from heaven, proves all temperate men will be saved. All the unregenerate sinners in the world are comprehended in this one threatening, *Except ye repent ye shall all perish*. But in order more effectually to arrest the attention of an impenitent world, God has prepared a particular threatening for every kind of wickedness, to alarm the fears of all classes of sinners. They who apostatize from the faith are manifestly among his enemies. Before their apostacy, while they appear to be his friends, the threatenings which are pointed against *hypocrites*, belong to them; but when they become his open enemies, then the threatenings denounced against *apostates* overtake them.

Thus we can see how God can execute *every threatening* of his word, and yet keep the feet of his saints, and bring them all to glory; but we can not understand how he can fulfil *all the promises* he has made to them, and to their Surety concerning them, and yet suffer any of their number to fall and perish.

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

If, in addition to all the direct proof in favor of this Article, it can be shown to accord with those, whose agreement with the scripture is already ascertained, it will do much to confirm us in its truth. There are none of the doctrines in the system with which it is at variance; and with most of them its harmony is very apparent. Let us begin with our first two Articles: *A God of infinite natural and moral attributes—designing by his works to make the best and most durable display of his glory*. It is evident, that without *intelligent* creatures, God could make no display at all; nor would his *glory* be displayed without the existence of creatures of a *holy character*; nor would its display be permanent, unless some of his creatures were to retain their holy character forever.

From the scriptures we are led to conclude, that those creatures who are recovered to holiness, will serve to make a brighter manifestation of the perfections of Jehovah, than those who were preserved from apostacy. Hence Zion, the city of the redeemed, is said to be “the perfection of beauty,” the place which God hath chosen for his rest, where he will dwell forever. The church is a holy temple, builded for an habitation of God through the Spirit. Christ is glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe. Principalities and powers in heavenly places are to learn, by means of the church, the manifold wisdom of God. Ps. l. 2; cxxxii. 13, 14. Eph. ii. 22; iii. 10. 2 Thess. i. 10.

but also the light in which he was now to be treated by the holy government of God. If this text must have its translation altered, lest it should seem to implicate the character of the Redeemer, we shall for the same reason, want an alteration in such texts as Isa. liii. 6, 2 Cor. v. 21, Gal. iii. 13, and Heb. ix. 28.



Since the church of God, redeemed by the blood of his Son, and sanctified by his Spirit, is the glory of the *universe*, as Canaan was the glory of the *earth*, it must constitute an interest that he greatly cares for; and it might naturally be expected that his eyes would be always upon it for good. See Deut. ii. 12. If the gates of hell could prevail against the church, to destroy it by causing an apostacy among the children of the second Adam, there would be nothing to assure us, that the whole display of divine glory, which is made in the works of creation and providence, would not be lost. If it should be said, the redeemed church can not be destroyed, apostacy can never extend to *all* the children of the last Adam; I would ask, where are the promises to secure us against a universal apostacy, which do not give security to every individual who has by grace been adopted into the family of Christ? When this holy family is figuratively represented by a tabernacle, assurance is given that it shall never be taken down; that not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be moved, neither any of the cords thereof broken: and when it is represented by corn in the sieve, we are assured however violently it may be tossed; that not the least grain shall fall upon the earth. Isa. xxxiii. 20; Amos ix. 9.

It is *moral* perfection that makes the greatness of the Divine Being an "*excellent* greatness." The more ample the proof which he gives, that his immense natural attributes are equalled by his unchanging holiness, the more valuable is the manifestation which he makes. In a holy character *veracity* is an essential ingredient. It has a conspicuous place in the character of our Creator. "God cannot lie." What he has spoken with his mouth, he will fulfill with his hand. But how does he make it appear that he cannot lie? There is nothing that has come to our knowledge, in which he shows his regard to truth in so clear and convincing a manner, as in keeping covenant with his redeemed people, especially during that period of their existence while they remain upon earth. In establishing this covenant with them, he shows the greatest possible favor to creatures, who had always hated him without a cause; and who, after he had provided a way for their reconciliation by the death of his Son, manifested nothing but ingratitude and obstinate rebellion. The act, by which he first reconciles them to himself, is a bright manifestation of his power and grace; but it is in their *after preservation* that his *truth* and *faithfulness* are the most wonderfully displayed. They would never persevere, were it not for *his* aid. It is by the power of God they are kept. The provocations of which they are guilty, after their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, their emancipation from Satan's yoke, are innumerable; and yet he does not cast them off; he does not disinherit them; no, not one of them. He has made an engagement to them all, to be a Father to them; therefore, instead of forsaking them, as their sins deserve, he subdues their iniquities, and casts their sins into the depths of the sea. Micah vii. 19. Though they fall, they rise again, and hold on their way even to the end of their days. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age, to show that the Lord is upright. Ps. xcii. 13, 14. Their enduring to the end, and bringing forth fruit in old age, in contradistinction from their religion's withering away and coming to nothing, will show that the Lord is upright; that he is a God of truth, on whose

promises we may most implicitly rely. It will illustrate that sweet declaration, so often repeated in the 136th Psalm, *His mercy endureth forever*. The proof of veracity, which the Most High has given in keeping covenant with his elect angels, is not to be compared with this; for they have done nothing to provoke him to forsake them. But such are the provocations of his elect people on earth, that their case would be hopeless, were it not that his mercy is built up forever, and his faithfulness established in the very heavens. Ps. lxxxix. 2. To be deprived of that display of divine faithfulness, which is made by the established connection between grace and glory—between the dawn of light and the perfect day, would be an infinite loss to the universe.

There is no discord between this and the *third* Article. The law, it is true, makes no provision for such a thing as forgiveness, even in a single instance; but it presents no obstacle to its repetition, however frequent, when the way is prepared for its consistent exercise. It would be repugnant to the spirit of the third Article, if transgressors were to receive forgiveness, short of their taking the side of the law, and returning to their allegiance. And it would be casting contempt on the law, to have a perpetuity of divine favor secured, unless their penitence, faith, and obedient character, were also made sure.

This Article harmonizes with the *fourth*. Creatures, who are but partially recovered from the ruins of the fall, certainly need a covenant of free grace—a covenant of enduring mercy. No other would reach the necessity of their case. They need better security for perseverance, than their own good resolutions, even when they are in their best frames. We do not see how it is possible, that the man who has become experimentally convinced of his moral impotence, unless he has also been enlightened into the truth of the present Article, should start in the Christian race, with the least expectation of winning the prize.

The agreement between this and the *fifth* Article, is very apparent. The atonement which God has provided for this fallen world, contains virtue enough to give support to the doctrine of the final perseverance of all such as become interested in its benefits. The *blood* of Christ is sufficient to insure this happy result; for it cleanseth from all sin. His *love* is also equal to it; for it is testified of him, that “having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” There is a special sense in which God has given *them* his Son; and how shall he not with him also freely give them all things; even all things that are necessary to their final perseverance? *If any man, any believer in Christ, sin, we have an Advocate with the Father.*

In the *sixth* and *seventh* Articles there is nothing in opposition to the one now before us. Those Articles show that the salvation of the gospel is offered to all men, and that it is rejected by all the unregenerate. Now these facts seem to imply; that when, by means of regenerating grace, the offer has been accepted, we are placed on new ground; so that henceforward it shall not be with us as though it had not been accepted.

Between *this* and the *eighth*, *ninth*, and *tenth* Articles, the agreement is very manifest. In the *eighth*, we saw God, by his own power, effecting a radical change in the hearts of the sinful children of men; in the *ninth* it was shown, that this was an act of grace, both special

and sovereign; and in the *tenth*, that it was according to the wise purpose of his own mind concerning those individuals who are "partakers of the benefit." Now it must be evident to all, that if God can quicken us when we are dead in sins, he can preserve the spiritual life he has imparted, and revive it when it is languishing. If he has such a direct access to the mind that he can cause the stubborn will to bow, he can keep it in subjection.\* And if his grace is great enough to induce him to begin the work, it is natural to expect it should lead him to finish it. Paul testifies, "By the grace of God I am what I am." The salvation of every one of the redeemed is grace in the foundation; and the top-stone will be brought forth with shouting, crying grace, grace unto it. "If when we were enemies we were reconciled by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." If we have been called into the kingdom of God according to his eternal purpose, is it not unnatural to suppose this purpose to have its full accomplishment in our conversion? Is it not much more reasonable to view it as reaching forward to the perfect holiness and blessedness of heaven, taking conversion in the way as a necessary preparation for such a heaven? "As many as were ordained to *eternal life* believed."

This Article makes an entire concord with the one which stands immediately before it. As soon as we are made acquainted with the gracious way in which the believer is justified, we should expect to find it a "justification unto *life*," even eternal life. We should naturally anticipate the declaration which the apostle makes concerning it, when he says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus:" and come to the conclusion; that when grace has gotten dominion, in a way so honorable to divine justice, it would reign unto eternal life through righteousness, even that righteousness which is by Jesus Christ our Lord. Rom. v. 21.

#### REMARKS.

1. If the perseverance of all true saints is certain, then he who makes his calling and election sure, also makes sure his salvation. But if an individual, among those who are called into the kingdom, can fail of being glorified, then making one's calling sure, does not make sure his glorification. Nor, in this case, could any saint, however eminent his attainments, be assured of his eternal salvation, unless he should be certified of it by an express revelation from God.

2. If the evidence of regeneration were obtained by some visionary, or other unholy experience, the doctrine of an infallible connexion between this change and eternal life, might be prejudicial to the cause of holiness. But they who consider nothing as an evidence of it, except holiness of heart and life, can sustain their hope in no way different from that in which they acquired it. Such do not, by

\* I never knew an individual, among those who believe that regeneration is effected by a special and direct influence of the Spirit on the heart, disbelieve the certainty of the saints' perseverance.



connecting the doctrine of perseverance with a hope once obtained, sit down contented with this for all subsequent life. They still look for scriptural evidences of this change; and so far as these are discovered, the doctrine in question ministers comfort, because it gives them just as much assurance that they shall at length reach the heavenly country, as they now have that they are in the way which leads to it.

3. If God has promised to sustain and carry on a work of grace in every heart where he begins it, we can see what it is emboldens the convert to make an open profession of his religion, together with an engagement to serve Christ to the very end of his life. He has no stock of grace, no, not enough to last him a single day; and yet he engages a whole life of obedience. This he may do without arrogance or self-sufficiency, since the all-sufficient God has said to him, "*My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*"

4. If an interest in Christ is a good of such a nature, that being once acquired can never be lost, it has a peculiar claim to our attention. Its intrinsic superiority to all other blessings is so great, that it well deserves to be called *the one thing needful*; and, in distinction from all others, it is "that good part which shall not be taken away." God gives property, and takes it away. He gives life and health, and takes them away. He gives the means of grace, and when they are abused, takes them away. After giving his Spirit to strive with men, he often takes it away. But when he gives the true riches, he never takes them away. "The Lord will give *grace and glory.*" When he gives the one, he always gives the other. Grace is the only blessing God gives to men, which he stands engaged neither to take from them himself, nor to suffer them to lose by their own folly.

" Ho, ye that pant for living streams,  
And pine away and die;  
Here you may quench your raging thirst,  
With springs that *never dry.*"

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## ARTICLE XIII.

AT THE END OF THE WORLD THERE WILL BE A GENERAL JUDGMENT,  
IN WHICH CHRIST WILL PRESIDE AS SUPREME JUDGE; WHEN HE WILL  
PASS AN IRREVERSIBLE SENTENCE OF APPROBATION ON THE RIGHTEOUS,  
AND OF CONDEMNATION ON THE WICKED.

THIS forms an essential Article of Christian faith, and is so clearly revealed, that no doubt can be entertained concerning its truth. Each particular comprehended in it, can be fully proved by the word of God: viz. That the judgment will be *general*—That *Christ* will preside as

supreme Judge—That the righteous and the wicked will each receive an appropriate sentence, *the one of approbation*, and *the other of condemnation*—And that in both cases the sentence will be *irreversible*.

I. The judgment will be *general*. The scriptures very naturally lead us to the conclusion, that all God's intelligent creatures will be judged, that is, that they will undergo a trial in public, in which their conduct, during their different probationary seasons, will be impartially examined, with a view to its being approved or condemned, according to its character. Of the extent of the intelligent creation we are not informed. The revelation with which we are favored, makes explicit mention of two, and only two orders of accountable creatures, namely, *angels* and *men*. Both these will be brought before the same judgment seat. That the fallen angels will be arraigned at the same tribunal with the human race, is made evident by a passage which we find in the epistle of Jude: "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." The judgment of the great day, unto which the rebel angels are reserved, is the same at which all the children of men must appear. It is here that the saints will judge angels, (i. e. apostate angels,) as they will not only inwardly approve, but openly express their approbation of that sentence of condemnation which the supreme Judge will pronounce upon them. 1 Cor. vi. 3. And if the *fallen angels* are to appear at the same judgment seat with the human race, it may be inferred that the *holy angels* will appear there too. Since holy men are brought before the same tribunal with wicked men, there would be a want of analogy in the procedure, in case holy angels were not to appear in judgment with those angels that rebelled. Nor are we left to mere analogical reasoning to prove the point, that holy as well as apostate angels will be summoned to the bar of the Judge: for when he shall come to gather the inhabitants of the earth before him, he tells us himself, that "he shall come in his glory, *and all the holy angels with him*." That they will not come merely as his attendants to grace the august occasion, but also as his accountable creatures to stand before him in judgment, is strongly implied in the circumstance, that on this occasion they *all* come, not one remains behind. See Matt. xxv. 31.

That the judgment will extend to the whole of Adam's race will not be disputed. Immediately anterior to the resurrection, the whole race will be comprehended in two classes, denominated the *quick* and *dead*: and both are to be arraigned before the judgment seat. By the *quick* are meant the living, even all who shall remain on the earth at the second coming of Christ; and the *dead* comprehend all those who shall have died before that period. Both classes, however, will be alive at the time of the judgment; for this solemn event will be immediately preceded by the resurrection of the dead. The universality of the resurrection, is an argument to prove that the judgment will be universal, extending to all the race. All ages and ranks of men will arise from the sleep of death; and they will arise to be judged. John, in the Revelation, testifies, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." Rev. xx. 12. The resurrection will include both classes of *characters*, of which our world is composed; for it is said, "There

shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the *just* and *unjust*." "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, (i. e. the voice of Christ, which may be the same as the sound of the archangel's trump.) and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Acts, xxiv. 15. John v. 28, 29.

The resurrection will be immediately succeeded by the judgment. The former will not take place until the judge shall appear in the clouds of heaven. As soon as the dead are raised, then "before him shall be gathered *all nations*." Matt. xxv. 32. The judgment will not be confined to the nations who acknowledged the true God: they who worshiped idols, as well as the worshipers of Jehovah, must be judged at his tribunal. He is the Judge of *all the earth*." For we must all appear before the same judgment seat, let our nation, our religion, or our character be what it may. Gen. xviii. 25. Rom. xiv. 10. This will lead me to show,

II. *That Christ will preside as Supreme Judge.* This is as clearly revealed as that there shall be a judgment day. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, declares that we shall all stand before the judgment seat of *Christ*: and in one of his epistles to the Corinthians, he repeats the same declaration. 2 Cor. v. 10. In addressing a solemn charge to his son Timothy, he reminds him that he does it before the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead. When this apostle was at Athens, and had occasion to speak of the judgment, he told them that God had appointed a day, in which he would judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he had ordained; whereof he had given assurance unto all men, in that he had raised him from the dead. Acts xvii. 31. With this agree the words of Christ himself, who testifies: "The Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." John v. 22, 23. To this amazing work he will prove himself fully adequate; for it is he who searcheth the reins and the hearts; and he will give unto every one according to his works. Rev. ii. 23. This leads me to consider another important ingredient in this Article; viz:

III. *That in the day of judgment the righteous and the wicked will each receive an appropriate sentence, the one of approbation and the other of condemnation.* When Christ shall gather all nations before him, "he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he will set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." Although the number gathered before him will be incalculably great, they will easily, by his discerning eye, be divided into two companies. All distinctions made between men, except that which is made by their *character*, will now be disregarded: "For there is no respect of persons with God." They will all come under the class of *the righteous*, or *the wicked*. The righteous, including all those subjects of divine government who never revolted, together with all those who have submitted to the terms of reconciliation, will be collected into one company, and placed on the right hand of the Judge: and all those who have revolted and not returned to their allegiance, will be collected together in another company, and placed on the left hand.



The reasons for their being thus separated and placed, will now be made manifest to all ; for this is none other than the day of the *revelation* of God's righteous judgment. "He shall judge the world with righteousness." "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil ;" and will give "every man according as his work shall be." Rom. ii. 5. Eccl. xii. 14. Rev. xxii. 12. Every individual will have a fair and impartial trial, in which his true character will be disclosed to himself, and to the assembled universe. This immensely solemn transaction will be closed, by a sentence of approbation on the righteous, and of condemnation on the wicked. The account, which we have from the lips of the Judge himself, is this : "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Matt. xxv. 34—41.

Those righteous characters, brought to the right hand of the Judge from our apostate world, were once in a state of dreadful hostility against the holy government of God. No attempt will now be made, either by themselves or their Judge, to conceal this fact ; nor to conceal or palliate any of their ill-deserving conduct, whether before or after their adoption into the family of Christ : and yet there is a sense in which their sins *shall not be mentioned* to them. Ezck. xviii. 22. The sentence which shall now be pronounced upon the righteous, will not be of a mixed character, partly of approbation, and partly of condemnation. While on earth they receive a full pardon through the blood of the cross ; and in the day of judgment there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.

On the other hand, the sentence to be pronounced on the wicked, contains no favor ; it is wholly a sentence of condemnation. The infinite purity of the Judge gives us assurance that he will not confound the righteous with the wicked : and that he will not pass a sentence which shall make the righteous as the wicked, or the wicked as the righteous. Such a procedure will be far from him ; for surely the Judge of all the earth will do right. It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them who trouble his devoted servants, and to give rest to them who are troubled and persecuted for righteousness' sake. And both these he will do when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, to judge the world. 2 Thess. i. 6—10.

IV. *The sentence to be passed, both on the righteous and the wicked, is irreversible.* There is no appeal from the judgment of Christ ; he is Judge *supreme* : "he openeth, and no man shutteth ; and shutteth, and no man openeth." Rev. iii. 7. Nor will he ever reverse his own sentence. It is the judgment of the *great day*, and of the *last day* ; it is final, as it fixes the state of the intelligent creation for a whole eternity. On this account it is called "eternal judgment." Heb. vi. 2. The sentence in favor of the righteous is eternal. They are now openly acquitted and justified, with an assurance that they will never be condemned. Their sins and iniquities will be remembered no more. Their *character* and their *reward* will both be declared permanent and immu-

table. "He that is righteous, let him be righteous still ; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Rev. xxii. 11. The righteous shall go into life eternal ; they shall be ever with the Lord. They shall be made pillars in the temple of God, and go no more out. Matt. xxv. 46. 1 Thess. iv. 17. Rev. iii. 12.

The sentence which is to be passed upon the wicked, is as irreversible, and as lasting in its consequences, as that which will be passed upon the righteous. This is a truth full of dread to those who possess the character which will be publicly reprobated in the great day. Who can think of enduring eternal misery, without his heart's sinking within him ? "The sinners in Zion are afraid ; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites : who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire ? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings ?" Isa. xxxiii. 14.

As the eternity of the rewards of the righteous is not disputed, its proof is not particularly called for ; but as the eternity of the punishment of the wicked is denied by many, the proof may be required. In the view of some, it will perhaps indicate a mind devoid of benevolent feelings, to make the least attempt to search after proof, to establish so unpleasant a doctrine. But who, I would ask, manifested the most love to souls ; the prophets who promised the wicked life, or those who fearlessly denounced the threatenings of God against them ? What teacher ever manifested so much genuine compassion for souls, as he who came to die for their redemption ? and yet he did not conceal from graceless men their imminent danger of eternal punishment. On this subject his instructions were uncommonly copious. Take for a specimen his sermon on the mount. See Matt. v. 22, 25, 26, 29, 30 ; vii. 13, 14. If there is proof of eternal punishment, who can be so unwise as to wish it withheld ?

It would protract this Article to a disproportionate length, were anything more to be done than merely to *suggest* some of the leading arguments, which prove the doctrine of the endless punishment of the wicked.

First. Words, which are as expressive of endless duration, as any used in the scriptures, are applied to the future misery of the wicked. Their punishment is said to be *everlasting*, and the smoke of their torment to ascend up *for ever and ever*, so that they have no rest day nor night. Matt. xxv. 46. Rev. xix. 3 ; xiv. 11.

Secondly. The misery of the wicked is put in contrast with the blessedness of the righteous, and the duration of each is expressed by the same word. From this circumstance it is natural to infer, that if the one is endless, so is the other. When they, who sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake in the resurrection morning, some will awake to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Dan. xii. 2. "And these (i. e. the wicked) shall go away into everlasting punishment ; but the righteous into life eternal." Matt. xxv. 46. It is well known, that in this last text, the word which is rendered *everlasting*, and that which is rendered *eternal*, are exactly the same in the original language.

Thirdly. While they who are admitted to the joys of heaven, are said to have had all their evil things in the present world, those who awake in the torments of hell, are represented as having had all their

good things here ; and in the other world there is said to be an impassable gulf fixed between the blessed and the miserable, so as effectually to prevent any passing from one to the other. Luke xvi. 25, 26. As there is no fear that any of the inhabitants of heaven will fall into the bottomless pit ; so there is no hope that any will rise from thence to the kingdom of heaven.

Fourthly. That which is represented as the *means* of misery to the damned, is said to last forever. " Their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." Matt. ix. 44. Whatever it be which causes their misery, it is to remain forever, and unceasingly to produce the same effect.

Fifthly. If there be a sin which has no forgiveness, then a universal salvation of the race of Adam ought not to be expected. But the Savior assures us, that " the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men ;" and that the man who is guilty of this sin *hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation*. It appears that he was led to make this statement, so important to be known by all, who are liable to commit the sin which can never be forgiven, " because they said, He hath an unclean spirit : " or, in other words, because that by maliciously imputing to the influence of the devil those merciful and wonderful works, which he wrought by the finger of God, they had blasphemed the Holy Ghost. See Mark iii. 28—30.

Sixthly. Concerning the disciple, who was about to betray him, Jesus said, " It had been good for that man, if he had not been born." This he could not have said, in consistency with truth, had he determined at any future period, however remote, to extend mercy to the traitor, and to bring him from the regions of darkness to enjoy the light of heaven.

Seventhly. The desperate condition of those who lose their souls, is forcibly expressed in this declaration, " There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." This alarming declaration implies a final failure of an interest in that sacrifice which has been offered for sins, together with an assurance that no other sacrifice will be provided. There is danger we shall flatter ourselves with the hope, that, though we should die in our sins, the mercy of God will provide some way for our escape from future misery ; or, at least, from that which is *eternal*. But the declaration to which I have referred, is calculated to put an end to all such vain hopes. God lets us know, he has made all the provision for our salvation he ever designs to make. If we tread under foot the blood of the Son of God, and do despite unto the Spirit of grace, there remains nothing but " a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." Heb. x. 26—29. How divinely true then is that proverb, " When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish ; and the hope of unjust men perisheth." Prov. xi. 7.

Eighthly. Another argument to prove that the sentence to be passed upon the wicked will be irreversible, is derived from that *fixedness of character* which is attributed to them : " The wicked is driven away in his wickedness." At the day of judgment, every man will appear in the same character with which he closed his probationary state. Every one is to be judged according to the deeds done *in his body*. The



character he formed while in the body, will be his unalterable character forever. It is at the time when Christ shall come, bringing his reward with him, to give every man according as his work shall be, that he will say, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." Rev. xxii. 11, 12. The fountain that was opened for sin and uncleanness, stands open no longer; the Spirit that is given to convince of sin, of righteousness, and judgment, is limited, for the performance of his work, to a certain period, and does not *always* strive with man. And surely nothing can be more evident than this; that if those who are on the left hand of the Judge are forever to retain their impenitent character, (and there is not a gleam of hope furnished by the scriptures of their being regenerated in hell,) they must continue in a state of condemnation, and forever remain under the manifestations of the wrath of God.

Thus have the different particulars in this Article all been shown to be in accordance with the lively oracles. Now if this has been done in reality, and not in appearance, then there can be nothing in all the Bible in contrariety to it. Every part of the word of God does not treat on the subject of the judgment; but certainly no passage intimates that there is to be no judgment; or that it will not be general, extending to all the nations of the earth, and to every individual of the race; nor is there any which denies the resurrection of the dead, that essential appendage of the judgment day. In apostolic times they were considered as scoffers, and not Christians, who denied, or even doubted the certainty of the day of judgment. And they who denied the resurrection of the body, or who pretended it was then already past, were considered to be in a high degree heretical, and in fact no better than infidels. 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4. 2 Tim. ii. 18. To those who denied the resurrection of the body, Christ himself said, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." Matt. xxii. 29.

As the inspired writings furnish nothing to weaken our belief of a general judgment, so it is with respect to the person to whom the judgment is committed; they nowhere tell us that *Christ* is not to be the Judge. I know it is said, in the fiftieth Psalm, "*Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare his righteousness; for God is Judge himself.*" I fully concede that this passage proves that God himself is to be the Judge of quick and dead, and that he will not entrust a work so great and so difficult to the hands of any creature. He will judge the world himself, and not by proxy. But in perfect consistency with this concession, the position can still be maintained, that Christ is to be Judge supreme: "for in him dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily." He is himself God over all blessed forever.

As the scriptures contain nothing to induce a disbelief of the reality of the judgment, or of the truth of the declaration, that "all judgment is committed unto the Son;" so they contain nothing which ought to lead us to doubt, whether there will be a difference in the sentence that shall be passed on the righteous and the wicked; or whether this

sentence will be final and irreversible. I know, however, there are those who think they find much in the word of God which does not harmonize with this view of the transactions of the great day. There are some who imagine they find much to oppose the sentiment of any future punishment; and others, that they find enough to encourage them to hope that future punishment will be limited in its duration. But every man, who is a real believer in the inspiration of the scriptures, must be candid enough to acknowledge, either that all the texts we bring in favor of a discriminating and irreversible sentence, to be pronounced on the two characters arraigned before the judgment seat, are irrelevant and prove nothing; or that all the texts which are considered as presenting a different view of the subject, are perverted and made to speak a language entirely different from that which the Spirit of inspiration intended. That such a perversion of scripture is possible, we learn from a hint given by Peter at the close of his second epistle. Speaking of Paul's epistles, he says, "In which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." It appears, then, that the scriptures can be *wrested*, even to the destruction of those who do it.

It can hardly be expected, in a work which treats of so many subjects, and all comprised in a single volume, that copious answers should be given to all the difficulties which may be started; but since it is a leading object of this work, to show that the word of God exhibits one harmonious view of divine truth, I shall not wholly pass in silence those objections to our doctrine, which profess to be derived from the Bible itself; since they seem to be remarkably calculated to stupify those individuals who greatly need to be alarmed. I have not time to reply to all the texts, which have been made use of to oppose the doctrine before us; and since they are capable of being thrown into distinct classes, it is hardly necessary to examine them singly. If the principal texts of each class, without doing them any violence, can be made to harmonize with the doctrine contained in this Article, objectors ought to be satisfied. These texts may, I think, be comprehended under the four following heads.

1st. The first class are those which are designed to teach us that God is perfectly and immutably *kind* and *benevolent*. Under this class may be ranked such texts as these: "God is love." "The Lord is gracious and full of compassion; slow unto anger, of great mercy. The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works." "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God." "The Lord is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 1 John iv. 16. Ps. cxlv. 8, 9. Lam. iii. 33. Ez. xviii. 32. 2 Pet. iii. 9.

Passages like these teach us a truth infinitely to the honor of the Most High, a truth which lies at the foundation of all religion, both natural and revealed; namely, That the Divine nature is kind and benevolent; without being alloyed by any mixture of those contrary affections which are found in mankind. The love of good will in God

is not diminished by the contrary principle of malice or selfishness : his compassion and mercy are not counteracted by a cruel and unmerciful spirit. He does not save some, because he is *partly merciful*, and destroy others because he is *partly cruel* and unforgiving. To give his creatures a correct view of this matter, he tells them how he feels towards the misery of the wicked, when he says, "I have no pleasure in the death of him *that dieth*." Surely no one can say that this text tells the wicked man he shall not die, even in a sense widely different from that in which the righteous man dies ; but it is clearly designed to teach us that God does not, (how much so ever he abhors his character,) delight in his misery ; that is, that he does not delight in it as a good in itself, in the same manner that he does in the salvation and blessedness of the righteous man.

When it is said, "The Lord doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men," it seems to be a conceded point, that he *does* afflict and grieve them. So when it is said, "The Lord has no pleasure in the death of the wicked," it seems to be taken for granted, that the wicked, in distinction from the righteous, do die. The object aimed at in both declarations is the same, namely, to impress our minds with this fundamental truth, That the Lord is not influenced by unkind and malicious feelings, in bringing on his creatures the evils which befall them, either in this world, or in the world to come. The passages are not designed to tell us how many will be saved, or how many will be lost ; but rather to teach us, whether we are saved or lost, God is good, perfectly and immutably good ; so that if any of us should fall short of the heavenly rest, we may know it will not be through any defect of goodness in him. If these texts prove any thing against the doctrine contained in this Article, they prove too much ; they prove that misery can have no existence at all. It is as perfectly inconsistent for a benevolent being to take *complacency* in that misery which is limited in its duration, as in that which has no end. The only possible way to reconcile the existence of temporary misery, with the benevolence of the Deity, is, to suppose that he does not give it existence for its own sake, but for the sake of the good which he will make it the means of promoting. And who can tell that the same reason will not operate, for giving existence to misery which shall have no end ? If benevolence in the Creator, and misery in his creation, can co-exist, then this class of texts are not at all to the point.

There are many texts in the Bible which are designed to exhibit the *justice* of God, and his immutable opposition to the workers of iniquity. Justice and judgment are said to be the habitation of his throne. "God is angry with the wicked every day." "The wicked shall be turned into hell." "Vengeance is mine ; I will repay, saith the Lord."—These passages constitute a part of the holy scriptures, as much as those which relate to the divine benignity. Why would it not be equally as proper, to employ them to destroy the force of the others, as to make use of the others to destroy the force of these ? Why not say, Since justice and judgment are the habitation of God's throne, therefore mercy does not dwell with him ; and since he is angry with the wicked every day, he can have no benevolent feelings towards them ; and since



it is declared that the wicked shall be turned into hell, there is not the least prospect that the righteous will ever be admitted into heaven ? It is as proper to constitute one set of passages the *invading* army, as the other. But surely it does not become men, believing the inspiration of the scriptures, to be thus employed. There is no war between the different parts of God's word. Between the two sets of passages, now in question, there is a perfect agreement. The one exhibit the unmixed benevolence which exists in the Divine Being ; and the other enable us to perceive that this unmixed benevolence is not at variance with his justice ; that it neither prevents him from abhorring the wicked, nor from executing on them the curse of his broken law.

2dly. The texts which are designed to teach us *the infinite greatness of the atonement, and its sufficiency for all men*, are made use of to oppose the doctrine contained in this Article. The following passages may be placed in this class : Christ "gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." "He tasted death for every man." "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous ; and he is the propitiation for our sins ; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." 1 Tim. ii. 6. Heb. ii. 9. 1 John, ii. 1, 2. I would not speak a diminutive word of the atonement, which was made by the death of the Son of God. I believe it to be an infinite provision, made for the ransom of a lost world ; that the provision is great enough for all ; and that it was designed to set open before the children of Adam a great door of hope. But the texts which prove this provision to be sufficient for all, do not by any means prove that all will be savingly benefited by it. The door that divine mercy has opened, will at length be closed, while many are still standing without. And the door will not be closed by the servants, but by the Master himself, who will rise up and shut to the door, never to be opened again. Luke xiii. 25. The marriage supper is sufficient for all ; but concerning many of those, who had been once invited, it is said, they *shall not taste of the supper*. Surely those passages of scripture, which tell us that the God of Israel made a gracious offer of the land of Canaan to the generation that he brought out of Egypt, do not contradict other passages which inform us, that through unbelief they failed of entering the promised land. The land was before them ; the protection and assistance of the Lord of hosts were proffered them ; they might have gone forward and taken possession in spite of the sons of Anak, had they only confided in their God : but for want of faith, their carcasses fell in the wilderness. The children of men, guilty as they are, might all have an inheritance in heaven, which is truly the glory of all lands, would they but accept the gospel offer, and come up from the wilderness of this world, leaning upon the Beloved.

3dly. Sometimes there is a resort to that class of texts that foretell the *world's conversion in the days of the Millenium*. I refer to such as these : "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn again to the Lord." "All shall know me, from the least to the greatest."—"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills ; and all nations shall flow unto it." In this class, if I mistake not, we are to place that declaration of the Savior,

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” Ps. xxii. 27. Heb. viii. 11. Isa. ii. 2. John xii. 32.

These, with many other similar passages, prove beyond contradiction that there is a day coming, before the end of the world, when the religion of the Bible shall become universal ; when the church of Christ shall become commensurate with the inhabited globe ; when “the eyes of man, as of the tribes of Israel, shall be towards the Lord.” Zech. ix. 1. Allowing that these passages prove, that all who shall live in the Millenium, without any exception, will be saved ; still they furnish no proof of the salvation of all those who live and die either before or after this favored period. Should some man declare it to be his belief, that all the present inhabitants of the Society or Sandwich Islands are true followers of Christ, no one would be so uncandid as to say concerning such a man, that he believed this to have been the character of all their former inhabitants, who died before the name of Christ was made known to them. The salvation of one whole race of apostates, amounts to no proof that all apostates will be saved. The salvation of one sinner furnishes no decisive proof of the salvation of another, even in the same world of apostacy. Neither would the salvation of one whole nation in our revolted world, furnish proof that all other nations will be saved ; nor would the salvation of the whole race, during a certain period, amount to a proof of the salvation of the whole race, through all other periods. God has mercy on whom he will have mercy : and this applies to different periods, as well as to individuals of the same period.

4thly. I will mention one other class of texts, which are thought by some to be discordant with the doctrine of this Article ; I refer to those which are designed to establish the *certainty and complete salvation of all true believers*, and also the *certainty of the conversion and salvation of all those who were given to Christ as his elect seed*, though they have not yet believed. I will first recite, and accompany with remarks, some of the passages which appear to be designed to establish the certainty and complete salvation of all true believers. It is said that “the Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all that be bowed down.” Ps. cxlv. 14. In view of the final judgment it is said, “Then shall every man have praise of God.” 1 Cor. iv. 5. The 5th chapter of Romans and the 15th of the 1 Corinthians appear to belong to that portion of scripture, which merely establishes the complete salvation of those who are Christ’s. The promise of being upheld is made to *all the saints*, and to no others. “He will keep the feet of his *saints*.” 1 Sam. ii. 9. “A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again : but the wicked shall fall into mischief.” Prov. xxiv. 16. When, therefore, the scripture saith, the Lord upholdeth all that fall, it manifestly intends all of this character, i. e. the just : and the “every man” who shall have praise of God, is evidently every good man,—every man who possesses that character to which God has promised to manifest his approbation before the intelligent universe. Such men, in this world, are sometimes praised, and sometimes censured as vile hypocrites ; but to them it is a small thing to be judged of man’s judgment ; since the time is hastening, when the counsels of the heart will be made manifest, then every man, (i. e. of this character) shall have praise of *God*. But

surely this does not prove, that *they* shall have praise of God, concerning whom almost every page of his word has declared, that he will disown and condemn them.\*

In those chapters to which I have referred, in Paul's epistle to the Romans, and his first epistle to the Corinthians, there is a manifest contrast between the children of the first and of the second Adam. The children of the second Adam are represented as not only gaining all which they lost in their first father, but as rising to a greater eminence than that from which they fell by means of his breach of the legal covenant. And because the promise is sure to *all the chosen seed*, and because the context, as well as the whole tenor of the scripture, is calculated to guard us against a misapplication of the promise, therefore the universal term, *all*, is applied to these, as well as to the children of the first Adam. In the chapter referred to in Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, he is treating on the subject of the resurrection of those who sleep in Jesus, and of theirs alone, when he makes this statement: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Whom he intended by *all*, in this last clause, we learn from the verse which follows: "But every man in his own order; Christ the first fruits, afterwards *they that are Christ's*, at his coming." He manifestly meant *all that are Christ's*. To be *raised up at the last day*, when it is spoken of as a blessing, (and so it is evidently considered throughout this chapter,) is promised as the completion, or finishing stroke of gospel salvation; and is always represented as the peculiar privilege of such as are taught of God, and such as come to the Son by the drawing of the Father. All these, in the resurrection morning, will be raised in glory. But this contains nothing in opposition to that declaration, that some will awake from the sleep of death to shame and everlasting contempt. The phrase *all men*, used by the apostle, Rom. v. 18, seems to be limited by the preceding verse and the whole connection, so as to include none but believers in Christ. These are "they which receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness." To these the free gift comes, and that with power, unto justification of life. But if the phrase be understood without this limitation, then the

\* I do not know that the author of our psalmody has ever been claimed by the Universalists as favoring their sentiments. But he has a stanza in the 84th psalm, which gives them as good a right to claim him, as they have to claim Paul, or any other of the inspired writers. The stanza is this:

" Cheerful they walk with growing strength,  
Till *all* shall meet in heaven at length,  
Till *all* before his face appear,  
And join in nobler worship there."

"Do you not perceive," might one say, "how clearly Dr. Watts expresses the sentiments of the Universalists? Twice in one stanza he tells us that *all*, (and all does not mean a part,) will meet in heaven at length, and that *all* will appear before God's face, and join in the noble worship of the temple above." But why did nobody before ever suspect Dr. Watts of holding to these sentiments? The answer is plain: the stanza which preceded the one I have introduced, made it perfectly clear that the word *all* did not mean all mankind, but was limited to the *saints*. Here it is, so that the reader can judge for himself:

" Blest are the men whose hearts are set  
To find the way to Zion's gate,  
God is their strength, and through the road  
They lean upon their helper, God."



coming of the free gift unto justification of life, must refer to that free offer which is made unto all men indiscriminately, of being justified in case they exercise faith in the Son of God.

As to those passages which reveal it to be the Father's will, *that of all which he hath given to the Son he should lose nothing*; they are good proof, that such as were in a special sense given to the Son, as a reward of his obedience unto death, will not only be recovered from their depraved state by regenerating grace, but that they will also be preserved unto the heavenly kingdom. It proves that none will be able to deceive and ruin the elect: but how does this prove that reprobates will not be deceived and ruined?

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

This Article harmonizes with the *first* and *second*. What can be more fit and proper than this, that the Creator of all things should call his rational creatures to an account for their conduct? He is infinitely able to bring them before him, and to decide concerning their respective characters. The day of judgment will reflect much light upon the moral perfection of God, as it will manifest his delight in holiness, and his hatred of iniquity. It will give an advantageous opportunity to show his perfect impartiality; for when all nations are assembled before him, he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats: and he will set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. In making the division, it will be most manifest that God is no respecter of persons. Some of all nations, and of all classes of society, will undoubtedly be found in each of these two divisions; but no impenitent person will be found on the right, nor will any penitent character be found on the left hand.

The glory of the Eternal Being is the chief end of all his works. His moral perfection is that in which his glory chiefly consists; and the day of judgment will, in a wonderful manner, display that glory which consists in the purity of his nature, manifested in loving righteousness and hating wickedness.

The doctrine of a general judgment, and the everlasting separation which is then to be made between the righteous and the wicked, most perfectly harmonizes with the *third* and *fourth* Articles. The *third* brought into view an infinitely perfect law, given by the God of the spirits of all flesh, to regulate the conduct of his rational creatures. We found the Lawgiver, promising his favor to the obedient, and threatening his everlasting displeasure to those who should transgress his precepts. In the *fourth* Article we were led to contemplate the melancholy fact, that the divine law had been actually broken; that a part of the angels, and the whole race of Adam, had apostatized from God. In view of the promulgation of this law, and in view of the contempt which was cast upon it by such a wide-spread rebellion, how unspeakably important for the glory of the Lawgiver, and the effectual suppression of a spirit of rebellion, that this matter should have a public trial; and that the sentence of approbation on the righteous, and of

condemnation on the wicked, should pass in the presence of the assembled universe.

There certainly can be no disagreement between this and the *fifth* Article. The same wonderful Personage, who was there exhibited as making an atonement for the sin of men, is here presented to our view as the supreme Judge. For both of these works unlimited attributes are needful. In making the atonement, He, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, humbled himself infinitely low, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; but when he comes to judge the world, he will be highly exalted. If Jesus of Nazareth, who hung upon the cross, was the King of the Jews, and the Lord of glory, it must be apparent to all, that it is most suitable he should have the honor of being the Judge of quick and dead. The doctrine of atonement will appear very attractive and glorious in the day of judgment; as it will then be seen to have had an astonishing effect on an innumerable multitude of the race of Adam, in washing them from their sins, and preparing them for the right hand of the Judge. There will be a brighter radiance about the judgment seat of Christ, when it is viewed in connection with his cross. When all those who are standing before his judgment seat shall recognize, in the person of their Judge, Him who became a man of sorrows, and endured the ignominy and pain of the cross, for the purpose of supporting a righteous government, and opening a way for his enemies to be freed from condemnation; they must be convinced, however dreadful and intolerable may be the sentence which he passes upon the wicked, that it is not the result of malice, nor of a proud indifference to their happiness. When the *bleeding Savior*, and the *inflexible Judge*, are known to be one and the same character, his friends will be consoled, and his enemies confounded and put to silence.

There is no want of harmony between this and the *sixth* and *seventh* Articles. If the system of doctrines had closed with these Articles, there would have been none of the children of men prepared for the right hand of the Judge; for though in the *sixth* we saw all men invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb; yet in the *seventh* we find them all, with one consent, making excuse, and obstinately refusing to partake of the good provided for them.

In the *eighth* Article we considered the doctrine of regeneration. They who experience this change, become friendly to the character of God; they lothe themselves as the transgressors of his law; and they put their trust in Him who gave himself a ransom for their souls. Now in the day of judgment, these sanctified ones will all be distinguished from their fellow men, by being placed on the right hand of the Judge. Though they will not deserve such an honor, yet for such an honor has their sanctification prepared them.

The *ninth* Article relates to the sovereignty of grace in redemption. Between that and the present Article there is no variance. Both in forming creatures at first, and in creating them anew in Christ Jesus, the Most High is governed by no prescribed rules, but does that which seemeth good in his own eyes. But in the treatment of characters which are formed, he governs himself by rules of rectitude he has seen fit to make known to us. When we are in our sins, we have no pro-

mise from God, that he will ever renew our hearts; but when our hearts are renewed, we may know that we shall not be classed with the enemies of God, and may therefore have boldness in the day of judgment. 1 John, iv. 17.

There is a perfect harmony between this and the *tenth* Article. In that Article it was shown, that the difference which God now makes between men by his regenerating grace, was according to his eternal purpose. We found that all who would ever be saved, were, in distinction from others, given unto Christ as his elect seed. Some were given to him, and some were not given. And in the great day, all those who were given to him, will appear with him in glory. The elect will every one of them be made meet for the right hand, and the rest will all be fitted for destruction.

The harmony between this and the *eleventh* Article is very easily discovered. They who are *justified* now, will all be placed on the right hand at the great day, and will receive that welcome sentence, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Whom he justified, them he also glorified." The judgment is not designed to reverse anything which is confirmed by the Savior in the present world. What he binds on earth, he will bind at the day of judgment. They who are now freed from condemnation, will then have their sins blotted out by a public act of the Judge, and will be openly acknowledged as his friends. Acts iii. 19—21.

But if there had been no such truth in the word of God, as that which is contained in the *twelfth* Article, viz. *the perseverance of the saints*, then there would have been no certain connection between being justified here, and being openly acquitted in the day of judgment. Perseverance is the link which connects justification unto life with the actual enjoyment of life eternal. They who are justified by faith, are kept through faith unto salvation.

#### REMARKS.

1. If we are determined to believe nothing but what is confirmed by our senses, we shall reject from our creed the present Article, for we have never heard the archangel's trump, nor seen the dead arise from their tombs. We have not seen the dissolution of the world, nor witnessed the scenes of the last day. What if we have not? It is equally true that we did not witness the beginning of things; we did not see worlds spring into existence. It is "through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." And through faith in the inspired word, we understand that their frame will be at length taken down. It must be as easy for the Almighty to take down the fabric of the universe as it was to rear it up; and as easy to call men from death to life, as it was to call them from non-entity into existence. Why, I would demand with the apostle, "why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" I would add, why should it be thought a thing incredible, that God should judge the dead, after he has raised them to life?



2. Let a deep and abiding impression be made upon every mind, that the doctrine, which we have now been considering, is not only true, but exceedingly solemn and interesting. What a solemn thing, to be a man, an accountable creature ! “After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.” We shall be reckoned with. There are creatures in our world, which, though they have the same bodily senses with us, and the power of voluntary motion, will never be called before the judgment seat. Since they are incapable of knowing their Creator, or feeling an obligation to be governed by his laws, the object of their existence terminates with their lives : but with us it is not so. Our place in the created system is vastly more important than that of the beasts which perish. We are blessed with reason and a conscience, and immortality is stamped on our existence. It is true that we, as well as the beasts, die and turn to dust : but our dust, in distinction from theirs, will be reanimated ; and in the character of accountable creatures shall we be arraigned before the Judge of all the earth. “It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the *judgment* ;” the judgment, which shall decide for an endless eternity, the destiny both of the one who writes and the one who reads.

3. Though the judgment of the great day is unavoidable, the terrors of it may be avoided, by our passing judgment on ourselves beforehand : “for,” said the apostle, “if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.” If we will institute a trial, and arraign ourselves at the bar of conscience, and take the side of the supreme Judge, heartily condemning all that in our conduct which he condemns ; when he shall assume the judgment seat we shall not be judged, that is, judgment will not be passed against us. Before our probationary state closes, we are able to anticipate, as it respects our own case, the decisions of the last day. We have great advantages for doing it, since the written word, which Christ assures us is the rule by which those decisions will be regulated, is in our hands. John xii. 48. The character with which we shall appear before the judgment seat is formed in this life ; for every one will receive the things done in his *body* : and these things, whether they be external actions or affections of the mind, lie open to our own inspection. How dreadful it must be for us to go up to the judgment, in such a state as to be wholly unprepared to meet its investigations and decisions. Since unbelief and thoughtlessness do not cause judgment to linger, how foolish to be unbelieving and thoughtless on a subject so tremendously solemn ! “Agree with thine Adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him.” This, fellow sinner, is the advice of our best Friend. If we refuse to profit by it, and go up to the judgment seat, without having previously settled the controversy between us and God, we shall bewail our folly through a hopeless eternity.

## ARTICLE XIV.

THAT WHICH INSURES THE FULL DISPLAY OF THE CREATOR'S GLORY, ACCORDING TO THE FOREGOING SCHEME OF DOCTRINES, IS THE ETERNAL COUNSEL OF HIS OWN WILL, AND THE MIGHTY OPERATION OF HIS OWN HAND.

THIS Article divides itself into two branches, the one relating to the *counsel*, and the other to the *operation* or agency of God. I propose in a concise manner to take a distinct view of each branch: And,

I. Of the *counsel* of God. By this is intended the wise purpose of his infinitely capacious and holy mind, relative to all the works which his hand will ever accomplish. God does not work without a plan. In every thing he does, he has an object; and the means which he makes use of to accomplish it are dictated by his own infinite wisdom. The scriptures impel us to the conclusion, that from eternity he had a fixed purpose to originate a dependent universe, even the very one which now exists; and that he always intended to govern and manage it just as he has done.

The scriptures speak of the *counsel*, *purpose*, and *determination* of God, concerning future events. When we hear the Almighty saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure," we are led to contemplate his counsel as relating to events not yet brought to pass: and when we hear it asserted, that he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, we are manifestly led to view the counsel of his will as preceding his operations, and giving direction to them all. Isa. xlv. 10. Eph. i. 11.

The same thing is true concerning the *decree* of God; it is represented as going before, and as guiding his operations. It is said, "he hath made a decree which shall not pass." "The consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness." The consumption was decreed before it overflowed with righteousness. In one place it is said, "Before the decree bring forth;" which manifestly supposes the decree formed before the happening of the event to which it relates. Ps. cxlviii. 6. Isa. x. 22. Zeph. ii. 2.

The purposes of *God* are spoken of as relating to future events, as much as the purposes of *men*. "The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand." "I have purposed it, I will also do it." Isa. xiv. 24; xlv. 11. The expression, "called according to his purpose," clearly shows the purpose to precede the event to which it related. In truth, its antecedence was nothing less than a whole eternity; for the event referred to had just transpired, and yet was "according to the eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. viii. 28. Eph. iii. 11.

*Determination* is applied to God, to express the fixedness of his pur-

poses in relation to future events. He it is who says, "For my determination is to gather the nations." Concerning man's continuation upon the earth it is said, "His days are determined." And when it is said in relation to the treachery of Judas, Truly the Son of man goeth as it was determined, it clearly implies a *divine determination* concerning the very way in which the Savior was to fall into the hands of his enemies. To such a determination reference is had in this passage, which relates to his crucifixion: they were "gathered together for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." Acts iv. 28. Zeph. iii. 8. Job xiv. v. Luke xxii. 22.

*Counsel* is another word for decree. It not only intimates that God has a purpose concerning future events, but also supposes such purpose to be the result of wise contrivance. Herein the scripture doctrine of *divine decrees* differs essentially from *fatalism*. The Fates, according to the mythology of the pagans, were above their gods. The immutable fixedness, which they were thought to give to events, was not supposed to be the result of any wise and benevolent contrivance. The only reason which could be urged for submitting to *fate*, must have been derived from the impossibility of obtaining any alteration in its decrees. The ground of submission to the decrees of God, is altogether different; since this doctrine supposes, that, in the most perfect exercise of liberty, his infinitely capacious mind, looking through immensity and eternity, discovered, without the least liability to mistake, what would make the best display of his glory, by securing the greatest amount of good to the intelligent universe; or, in other words, the greatest sum of holiness and blessedness: and that the system of operation which he saw would do this, he chose in preference to all others. Although the divine plan is from eternity, it is to be considered as the result of *counsel*. The *being*, *wisdom*, and *purpose* of God, are all eternal; and yet there is an order in which we must conceive of them; and that order cannot be reversed. We form a conception, first, of his *being*, then of his *wisdom*, and after that, of his *purpose*. Were there no God, there could be no divine wisdom to contrive; and were there no wisdom to contrive, there could be no contrivance—no plan could exist. In support of the sentiment, that God works by a plan, I shall adduce two or three plain proofs.

1. A plan of operation, and one that is perfect, is clearly to be inferred from the perfection of his nature. No wise being can act without some end in view; nor without devising means to attain it; and this implies the existence of a plan. Is it not certain, that a being of infinite wisdom will never act without proposing to himself an object, nor without fixing on the means of accomplishing it? Admit the infinite natural and moral perfection of the Deity, and you must also admit the doctrine of a *perfect plan* of divine operation. But let us hear what the *scripture* says on this point. The apostle speaks of the saints as being predestinated "according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Eph. i. 11. Having here spoken of one thing of great importance, which God had brought to pass according to his eternal purpose, he was very naturally led to show that this was true in relation to every thing else; all things being wrought by him after the counsel of his own will. The sentiment



communicated in this text is something more than a prescience of future events; it imports a *plan*, and one which is the result of divine wisdom.

2. That God has a plan concerning things to come, is proved by scripture prophecies; which are nothing else than a development of his plan in relation to particular events. A great number of events, and events varying in character, are foretold; and they are spoken of, not merely as things which God foreknew, but as what he had purposed to accomplish. The descent of the Assyrian army upon the land of Israel, together with the destruction which awaited that army, are predicted as things which were purposed, and not merely foreknown. Isa. x. 5, 6; xiv. 24—27. The same is true concerning those predictions which relate to the conquest the Babylonians would gain over the Jews and the surrounding nations; and also those which relate to their being themselves conquered by the Persians. See Jer. xxv. 9—14: also the remaining part of the chapter. Indeed, prophesy in general has the complexion of a disclosure of divine purpose, rather than of things merely foreknown.

3. As the language with which the predictions are clothed induces us to believe that God has a purpose concerning future events, we are led to the same conclusion by what is said concerning those events that have already been brought to pass: they are spoken of as having taken place in accordance with a previous plan. The Jews, when under the oppression of the Chaldean monarchy, were taught to consider their afflictions as of divine appointment: "O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction." Hab. i. 12. Peter told the Jews, that the crucifixion of Christ, which had been effected by their wicked hands, was in accordance with the determinate counsel of God. Acts ii. 23. The conversions which took place in the island of Cyprus, under the ministry of Paul and Barnabas, are spoken of as the fulfillment of an antecedent purpose in relation to them. "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Acts xiii. 48. Indeed all other conversions are spoken of in the same way: "And we know," said the apostle, "that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose." Rom. viii. 28. It appears from this passage, that all who love God have been made the subjects of a call peculiar to themselves, and that this special call is in accordance with a divine purpose.

What can be more beneficial to the creation, or more honorable to the Creator, than to have every thing directed by his unerring counsel. The doctrine of a divinely concerted plan in relation to all existences and events, seems so harmonious with the perfection of the Supreme Being, that it is strange it should meet with such formidable objections, especially from those who profess to rejoice in his supremacy. It may be proper here to notice two or three of these objections.

1. It is objected, that decrees or purposes, when applied to God, stand opposed to the eternity of his existence. It is urged, that since he always existed in the time when the events take place, it must be improper to say, he determined on their existence by any previous counsel. What has already been advanced on this subject will do

something to obviate this objection. There is no propriety in saying, that the creation has existed from eternity, because the purpose to give it existence is thus ancient. It is by no means true that passing events took place from eternity, or as soon as creation, or even as soon as the events of the last hour. Successive events are not simultaneous. They do not appear so to God, any more than to us. He existed *before* these events; and it is true that he always existed at the time of their happening, because he *inhabits eternity*. Isa. lvii. 15. Future events are present with him; yet he distinguishes between the present and the future, and speaks of the latter as existing, not in fact, but only in his purpose and counsel. The beginning and end of the world do not appear to him cotemporary, though he sees them both at once, and with equal clearness. The way in which we are to conceive of future events as present with God, is not by considering them as already accomplished, but by considering him as omnipresent relative to duration, as well as to space; so that his present existence reaches forward to the period when they will be actually accomplished. It is, therefore, equally as proper to say, that the Infinite Being has a purpose respecting future events, as to apply such purpose to finite beings. In this manner does he himself speak on this subject, in that blessed volume which he designs should make us acquainted with his character and counsels.

2. It is objected, that a *divine purpose* in relation to all events, renders *human effort* useless. This objection arises from a misconception of the doctrine in question; which does not suppose God to have fixed on the ultimate event, without including in his plan those subordinate events that are necessary to give it existence. For example: the doctrine does not suppose that a man shall live to a given age, without including a determination that he shall use the common supports of life: nor (as the case may be) that he shall use these supports, without procuring them by his own industry. The purpose of God embraces the whole affair—the age at which the man is to arrive—the supports by which his life is to be prolonged—also the means which he himself is to employ in obtaining them. Two things in relation to the matter God makes known; First, That, in case the man's life is to be lengthened out, it is to be effected by the use of means. Secondly, That he is not without a purpose, as to the extent in which these means shall be used, and also their success in lengthening out the life of this individual: for, “is there not an appointed time to man upon the earth?” Job vii. 1.

What sense would there be in saying, If an artist has formed a plan for a piece of mechanism, composed of many parts, to accomplish a certain object—for instance, to print out the hour of the day—then every thing in this machine is useless, unless it be the pointers? The truth is, there is nothing useless: there is no spring, nor wheel, nor pin, that can be spared. Take these, or any one of them away, and the pointers would not move. The plan the artist has laid to accomplish this object, by means of his whole machine, does not render a single part useless. And if there were any of the parts which could not be got into their place and perform their office, without their intending to do so, then certainly *his* plan could not make *their* voluntary

motion a matter of no importance, but would render it absolutely requisite.

3. It is urged with great vehemence, that the doctrine of decrees is repugnant to the *holiness of God*; since, if they include all things, they must include sin;—and how, (it is demanded) could God determine the existence of a thing so contrary, not only to the happiness of his creatures, but also to the holiness of his own nature? This is but a *seeming* difficulty: the scripture contemplates no real difficulty in the case: but speaks freely, without any concealment, of that part of God's plan which relates to the existence of sin. So it speaks of the treachery of Judas, and of the malice of those who crucified the Lord of glory. The difficulty is removed when we are told, that what men have done from wicked motives, "God meant for good." The psalmist says, "The wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." From this text we draw the conclusion, and that with great certainty, that the divine plan was so laid, as to suffer no more wrath of man, or of devils, to have existence, than what would be made to result in the glory of God and good of the intelligent system.

If the scriptures had represented the Most High, as taking complacence in all that conduct of ours which fulfills his decrees; if they had represented *him* as having the same motive in decreeing our wicked actions, that *we* have in doing them, then would the decrees of God in relation to the existence of sin, have stood directly opposed to his holy character. But this is far from being the representation which the scriptures make on this subject. They speak of God as most wise, holy and benevolent, in those very determinations which involve the sin and misery of his creatures. If his creatures think evil, he means it for good; if they gather together to fulfill the most wicked purpose, (as in the crucifixion of his Son,) he brings them together on this very occasion, to fulfill his most holy purpose of providing thereby an atonement for the sin of an apostate world.

II. I shall notice the doctrine of a *universal divine agency*. By this is meant, that God's agency is universally concerned in fulfilling his decrees; so that it is certain they will all be accomplished, and that whatever, on the whole, is for the best, will invariably be done. This was glanced at in the *second* Article, but it merits more particular attention. The Lord has not only laid his own plan; but it is he himself who executes it. His counsel is his plan; and we are taught that *He worketh all things* after the counsel of his own will. He is as independent in the execution of his decrees, as in forming them. It was as much the work of God to make the world, as to contrive how it should be made. In preserving and governing the world, he makes use of a great multitude of instruments; but these do not hinder him from preserving and governing according to his pleasure, and executing all his decrees. The Assembly of Divines appear to have spoken correctly in the Shorter Catechism, when they said; "God's works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful, preserving and governing, all his creatures and all their actions;" i. e. all created existence, whether persons or things; and all their actions and motions. Every thing which God has made, he holds in his hand, and manages at his pleasure.



The works of creation may be divided into four great divisions. 1. Inert matter. 2. That which has vegetable life. 3. That which has animal life. 4. That which has reason and accountableness. There is no man, except an atheist, who will withhold from God the honor of producing all these classes of creatures. "Of Him are *all things*." He chose to have all these kinds of creatures exist, and therefore he created them. And now they are created, does he not govern them all? What class of creatures is it that he does not govern? It can not be inert matter. This certainly can effect nothing independently of him; for of itself it has no design at all. It must be God who moves the stars along;—"who guideth Arcturus with his sons." Job xxxviii. 32. Things possessing vegetable life are equally dependent on the control of the Creator. He not only bringeth his cloud over the earth, and causeth the rain to descend to quicken the vegetable world; but by a more direct efficiency he causeth the grass, and all other vegetables, to grow. Ps. civ. 14. The scriptures represent the life and activity of animals, as being under the perfect control of their Creator: "In his hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind." Job 12. 10.

If there be any part of his creation which the Creator does not perfectly govern and control, in subserviency to his ultimate designs, it must be the rational accountable part. But concerning this part of creation, more than any other, we hear him often asserting his unrestrained and efficient operation. Many suppose, in the management of rational creatures, the Most High confines himself to two things: (1.) The upholding of their rational powers: and (2.) Placing before them motives to duty. They suppose he never operates directly upon their minds, to incline them the one way or the other. If this opinion were correct, it would indeed be difficult to see how God could fulfill his decrees by the actions of rational creatures; or how he could make those actions form any part of his plan. And is it not commonly true, that they who discard the doctrine of a direct agency, do also discard the decrees of God, at least so far as the actions of his accountable creatures are concerned? I do not see why we should not be obliged to relinquish the idea of a divine purpose, in relation to the actions of rational creatures, if God's agency were not concerned in giving them an existence; for we can not comprehend how he could make an unfailing decree concerning events, which he had wholly left to the undirected will of others to bring to pass. But it is matter of consolation, that nothing is left in this situation. The Lord of hosts hath purposed, and he will perform it. He declares, "My counsel shall stand, and *I will do all my pleasure*." He not only has a counsel concerning all things, but it is he "who *worketh all things*" after that counsel.

The scripture speaks very explicitly concerning God's managing the *hearts* of rational creatures. What can be more explicit than the language of the following passages: "The preparation of the heart in man—is from the Lord." "The king's heart" (i. e. the heart of the most independent and powerful among men) "is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will." "For it is God who worketh in you, both to *will* and to do of his good pleasure." Prov. xvi. 1; xxi. 1. Phil. ii. 13. The scripture repre-

sents man as a voluntary agent, and at the same time so perfectly dependent, that God is able to make use of his voluntary actions in every instance, (and that whether they be good or bad,) to bring to pass his holy designs. This is clearly taught in the two following texts: "A man's heart deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps." "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord that shall stand." Prov. xvi. 9; xix. 21. Hence it is, that the *work* of God is as perfect as his *plan*: for he always works according to his plan, without the smallest deviation. When the work of creation is considered as one great system, and when the work of providence is viewed in the same light; and when both are viewed in connection, we may say, "As for God, his work is perfect." Nothing can be put to it, or taken from it, without rendering it less perfect. In other words, it is the best system of creation and providence, taken as a great whole, which could have been contrived and brought into existence. The knowledge, benevolence, and power of the eternal God, have all been exercised in forming the plan and carrying it into effect. In creation, nothing was made but what He made; and in the whole system of events which have transpired, or ever will transpire, there is nothing fortuitous, nothing but what forms a part of the providence of God. All is brought to pass in a way, not only consistent with his infinite perfection, but in a way best calculated to exhibit that perfection to the admiring view of holy creatures in heaven and earth.

The two doctrines, which form this Article, have now been briefly considered. I trust it has been shown that they are not of human invention. There is much scripture which tends directly to confirm their truth, and there is nothing to invalidate it. We are nowhere warned against them, as against errors which dishonor God and endanger the soul. The abuse of these doctrines, and the erroneous inferences which it is supposed would be drawn from them, are taken notice of, and repelled, without a denial of the doctrines themselves, or an intimation that they were such as ought to be concealed. The purpose and agency of God are the very things that are in view when the apostle supposes an objector will say, "Why doth he yet find fault; for who hath resisted his will?" Rom. ix. 19. The objection assumes, that the apostle had taught that the will of God (not his preceptive but his decretive will) was always accomplished. Does he seek to remove the objection by asserting, that the will of God is sometimes successfully resisted? On the contrary, he proceeds to show that He has a perfect right to do his will, and that it illy becomes us to reply against a God of unlimited holiness and sovereignty. When, in another place, the same apostle introduces a cavalier as objecting to his being judged as a sinner, for doing those actions which God was causing to redound to his glory, he tells him that his damnation is just; without so much as intimating, that his assumed position was false, namely, That by means of his sin God would get glory to his name, even an augmentation of it. He merely condemns as corrupt and false, the inference which was pretended to be deduced from the doctrine, to wit, That sin was a harmless thing. Rom. iii. 5—8.

It will perhaps be said, that many things in the scriptures, do at least implicitly oppose the sentiments which are exhibited in this Ar-

ticle. Three objections against that part of it relating to God's purpose concerning future events, have been noticed, and briefly answered : viz. first, That the doctrine is inconsistent with his absolute eternity ; secondly, That it renders human effort useless ; and thirdly, That it is inconsistent with divine holiness. But is not this doctrine, some will say, at war with all that part of scripture which represents certain events, as depending on means to be used by ourselves, and as liable to fail of happening, in case such means fail to be used ? There is no real difficulty in discovering an agreement between those passages, which represent God as having an immutable counsel concerning such events as are dependent on means to be used by us ; and those other passages, which speak of the very existence of these events as depending on the use of these means. The divine plan ever embraces the means as well as the end. For an example : God determined to deliver Israel from subjection to the Philistines, by the destruction of their boasting champion, Goliath of Gath. He also determined that his destruction should be effected by the instrumentality of David, whom it was his design, by such particular means, to bring to the scene of battle. Every circumstance was comprehended in the divine plan ; such as this, that the giant should be prostrated by a stone, hurled from a sling. Nor ought we to doubt that the identical stone, which should do the execution, was selected by the wisdom of God. It may be proper to say ; had not David been sent down to the battle, Israel had not obtained that signal deliverance. But the Lord, who had determined to grant that deliverance, inclined the heart of Jesse to send his son to the camp, to visit his brethren, at that particular juncture ; and He inclined the heart of David, though but a stripling, to accept the challenge of the Philistine ; and He it was who directed the stone to the spot where it would do execution.

It is objected, that God's universal decree and agency, seem to suppose but *one agent* in the universe ; and therefore that these doctrines can have no agreement with those portions of scripture which represent men as voluntary actors, employing their own skill to contrive, and their own power to execute their plans. But if a military commander were to plan all the movements of his army, it would not follow that he was the only voluntary actor. His soldiers might exercise their free agency in adopting the plan of their general. This case does not, however, entirely illustrate the subject before us. The purpose of God is not a rule prescribed, by which we should regulate our conduct : it is merely the plan of his own operation. "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." We lay plans and execute them with as much freedom as though no being were above us. But God is the only being, who carries all his plans into execution. It is said, "There are many devices in a man's heart ; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." Many of our devices go into effect ; but not all of them. And when our devices are frustrated, His counsel stands ; for though a man's heart deviseth his way, the Lord directeth his steps. The word of God, it is true, exhibits a great multitude of *voluntary* actors ; yet but one of all these is represented to be *independent* in his actions. Should any say, A dependent, voluntary agent, (dependent even for his volitions,) is an absurdity ; I would ask, wherein the



absurdity consists? Why should it be thought incredible, that God should be able to make a voluntary agent, whose very volitions are dependent on himself? To those who doubt of this, may we not say, Ye do err, not knowing the power of God? The scriptures clearly teach our dependence on God for our voluntary exercises. He is said to turn our hearts at his pleasure, and to work in us both to will and to do. This is the plain language of scripture: and why should we not believe it? Is anything too hard for the Lord? It is the full extent of man's skill and power, to form a curious machine; but the wisdom and power of God are adequate to the formation of a voluntary agent; and when he is formed he can preserve him a voluntary and accountable agent, though he is as dependent for his exercises as for his existence.

There is another thing which appears like a still greater difficulty to many serious minds: The scriptures seem to speak of God as confining his efficiency to a particular class of free agents, namely, the humble and obedient, and as withdrawing his influence from those of an opposite character. Converts are represented as being indebted to the influence of the Spirit of God, for the commencement of their new character, and also for its continuance. They are subdued, and kept in voluntary subjection, by the power of God. It is true, that the recovery and sanctification of a sinner are attributed to God, as works of his special mercy; but this does not imply a denial of all divine efficiency in the actions of other men. It is ascribed to the power of God that the Red Sea was dried up, and that the waters of Jordan were cut off before the children of Israel; but when the waters of the sea and of the river covered their respective channels, they were as entirely dependent on the power of God, as when that power was manifested by a supernatural operation. The withdrawalment of God's holy Spirit, is threatened as a dreadful calamity; but the execution of this threatening does not imply, that the men thus forsaken, are left in a state of independent agency, even as it respects their exercises of heart. God is still making use of all their actions, words, and thoughts, to advance the interests of the kingdom of righteousness; therefore he has all these under his supreme control. He is said, not only in general, to harden their hearts: but to harden them to the commission of those particular sins which they actually commit. He does not conceal it, as though it were a thing dishonorable to his holy name, that he turned the hearts of the Egyptians to hate his people; and that he hardened the hearts of the devoted nations of Canaan, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly. And concerning the ten horns of the papal Anti-christ it is said, "For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill his will, and to agree to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled." Ps. cv. 25. Josh. xi. 20. Rev. xvii. 17.

When it is said, in the 37th Psalm, that "the steps of a *good man* are ordered by the Lord," we are taught this important truth, that the Lord has a special, providential care of good men, and that he orders their steps in mercy to their souls. But this declaration ought by no means to be so interpreted, as to exclude all divine direction in the movements of bad men. In reading the 10th, 45th, and 46th chapters

of Isaiah, we can not but notice, that the steps of the Assyrian and Persian monarchs, though not good men, appear to have been divinely directed, for the accomplishment of the designs of infinite wisdom : yet their steps were not, in the sense of the passage in the 37th Psalm, directed by the Lord. In like manner it is spoken of as the privilege of good men, to be led by the Spirit of God ; while the wicked are given up to their own hearts' lusts : and yet these, when following their own hearts' lusts, are shown to be in the hand of God, as much as the clay is in the hand of the potter. Nothing can be farther from their hearts, than a design of acting in concert with the Most High ; and yet it is a truth, which he considers honorable to himself, and consoling to his friends, that he has the management and control of his enemies, even of all the exercises of their rebellious wills.

But, it will be said, there is a certain passage of scripture, where moral evil is expressly declared to be a thing, in which the agency of God is not at all concerned. The thirteenth verse of the first chapter of James, I know, is often adduced for this purpose. It is as follows : " Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God ; for God can not be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." This is in harmony with all those texts which assert the perfect and unchangeable holiness of God. To be tempted with sin is an impeachment of the holiness of any one's character ; for it supposes sin to appear attractive, or, as our vulgar expression is, to *look tempting*. God can not be tempted with evil ; sin has no attractions to Him. " He is of purer eyes than to behold evil." Moral evil invariably appears to him vile and loathsome. And as God can not be tempted with evil, neither can he become a *tempter* to his creatures ; for the very idea of being a tempter, as the word is here used, would imply that the side of sin is espoused, and that with a view to its success against the cause of truth and righteousness. To be a tempter, is to wish well to the cause of iniquity. The devil is the chief tempter ; and in this he is imitated by all his children. In this sense assuredly God is no tempter. It is far from him to wish well to the cause of iniquity.

But the assertion, that God is not a tempter to sin, is not the same as to declare, that he has no efficient influence on those creatures which are sinful. Efficient influence is quite a different thing from temptation. Such influence exerted on the heart of a sinful creature, is not of necessity a sinful influence. Indeed character is not to be predicated of the influence itself, but only of its cause and effect. With respect to divine efficiency, we know nothing of the manner in which it is exerted. We can be informed concerning the motive which leads the Divine Mind to operate ; and we can become acquainted with the effect which is produced. We are led by the scriptures, to contemplate the Divine Agent, as being governed by motives equally pure, in his efficient operations on the hearts of sinful, as on the hearts of holy creatures. The effect produced on the two classes of creatures, so far as the character of their exercises is concerned, is very different ; but God is holy in all his works. Satan provoked David to number Israel ; and yet God is said to have moved him to do this thing. Satan acted the part of a tempter, and as such was gratified with the sin which David committed : but God did nothing which was of the nature of sinful temp-

tation ; nor was he gratified with the sin committed, but greatly displeased. Because it would be inconsistent for a holy God, to become a partner with sinners, it does not follow as a necessary consequence, that he must acknowledge their moral independence, and leave them wholly to a self-determining power of the will. Though he can evidently have no fellowship with the workers of iniquity ; yet he can turn their hearts and control them, so that they shall not be able to frustrate, but be even made to further his wise designs. There is no want of harmony between these two things, namely, God's taking no part with sinners, as one of their company ; and yet his making a benevolent use of their sin, in promoting the best interests of his holy kingdom.

I conclude that none will be so uncandid as to say, that the pious Scott, in his Commentary, has represented God as a tempter to sin, because he has said, "The first edict of Cyrus was procured by a secret operation of God on his mind ;" and because he accounts for Pilate's pertinacious refusal to gratify the Jews, in altering the superscription on the cross of Christ, by saying, "It was doubtless owing to the secret power of God upon his heart, in order that this attestation of our Lord's character might continue ;" even on the supposition that Cyrus and Pilate were unregenerate men ; the truth of which, particularly as it respects the latter, I conclude, none will dispute. Unregenerate men perform no actions which are not sinful, for their motives are always unholy. If, without being a tempter to sin, God can employ a secret power upon the heart of a sinner at one time, he can undoubtedly do it all times. If God could have a holy motive in secretly moving the mind of wicked Pilate, there is nothing which renders it impossible or improbable, that a holy motive should lead him to control the actions and volitions of his enemies through the whole universe.\*

\* By making this reference to the commentary of Dr. Scott, I would not be understood to assert, that, on the subject of God's efficiency upon the hearts of wicked men, his representations uniformly agree with those which are exhibited in this Article. But in the cases referred to, and others which might be pointed out, (see 1 Sam. x. 3, 4, and 2 Chron. xviii. 31,) it would seem as if there were no difference in our views of the subject. In these instances, though the dependent agents were sinful, the pious commentator perceived their actions to have such an immediate connection with the glory of God, that he did not think he was doing anything to eclipse his glory, when he represented him as operating on their minds in such a way as to secure the existence of those actions. On the contrary, he seems to have been cheered with the thought, that in the cases specified, the God of holiness had such complete control over the unholy minds of his creatures, as to *cause* them to accomplish his wise designs. And is it not common in such cases, that the friends of God have similar feelings ? Do they not bless Him, who is the source of all good, for inclining the heart of a selfish, as well as of a benevolent man, to devote his property for the support of the poor, or for the spread of the gospel in heathen lands ? Are they not also pleased with the thought, that it is in the power of God, by a secret operation on the mind of a sinner, to incline him both to read and hear the word, and to enter into the secret chamber to pray ? When they hear the devout Ezra blessing the God of his fathers, for *putting it into the heart of Artaxerxes*, a heathen king, to beautify the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, they are not at all offended at the expression which he uses ; nor do they feel any desire to have it so explained, as to imply no divine efficiency on his graceless heart. And why do they not ? Because God inclined him to *do good*. But let it be remembered that God did not incline him to be *good* ; for he was still, no doubt, nothing more than a natural man. Such a man is no more actuated by holy motives when he does good, than when he does evil : and as for God, he had equally good motives in turning the hearts of Egyptians to hate and enslave his people, as he had when he inclined their hearts to let them go. He was as holy and benevolent in putting it into the heart of Nebuchadnezzar to burn



There is nothing which makes it appear that the passage in the epistle of James, on which I have been remarking, was designed to oppose the sentiment of a universal divine agency ; but the address of the God of Israel to Cyrus, in the 45th chapter of Isaiah, seems to have been manifestly designed to establish such a sentiment. The same is true of many other portions of scripture ; but to which it is unnecessary to refer.

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

The two branches of this Article, which I have reserved for the close of the doctrinal series, are manifestly harmonious with each other.\* The *purpose* of God extends to all that is made, and to all which is brought to pass ; the same is true of his *agency*. As all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made ; so likewise all the events which take place, are brought to pass by him ; and without him there is not a single movement in the material or intellectual system. He it is “ who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” Ephes. i. 11. In this passage we are taught that the counsel and agency of God are co-extensive, and that both comprehend all things.

As this Article is consistent with itself, so it will be found to harmonize with all those which have preceded it. To begin with the *series*—It manifestly harmonizes with the two Articles with which we

the temple, as in putting it into the heart of Cyrus to order it rebuilt ; or into the heart of Artaxerxes to beautify it. These human agents were all actuated by selfish motives, and their hearts were equally under the control of that Divine Agent, who is over all. Their selfishness was their own : it existed nowhere else, except in their own depraved hearts. God was not its cause, as a fountain is of its streams. In this sense it proceeded not from him. We may rest assured that God is as benevolent, and that he acts with as much consistency, in governing the hearts of the wicked, as of the righteous. He can as completely direct and control the actions of the former, when they are in accordance with their selfish natures, as of the latter when they do the things which please him.

\* It may appear strange to my readers, to see this doctrine, which usually occupies an early place in a system of divine truth, now put at the close. My reason for this different arrangement I will here state. The scheme of THE HARMONY was first suggested to my mind, by being called to vindicate the doctrine of *personal election*. I usually found, when I had quoted texts of scripture in its support, that my antagonists would not attempt any direct answer to these texts, but would reply by saying, “ We believe in a free offer of salvation to all.” To which I would answer, “ This is my belief.” I then frequently proceeded to make a statement of what I conceived to be the scriptural system of doctrines ; which was substantially the same with that which I have given in this work. In my series of doctrines, I used purposely to omit mentioning the doctrine of *decrees* in its proper place, hoping, that in this way the laboring mind might be the more easily enlightened and relieved. I was led to think that the *entire sinfulness of the natural heart* was more generally believed, than the doctrine of *personal election*. And to me it always appeared very clear, that the man who acknowledged the total depravity of unrenowned nature, must unavoidably be led to see the necessity of “ the election of grace,” in order to insure the Redeemer a seed to serve him. The method I then adopted, is the one which has been pursued in the foregoing series ; namely, to avoid saying any thing directly of God’s purposes concerning future events, until the sinner had first an opportunity of seeing what could be done with a full atonement for his sin, and a free offer of eternal life, on the easy condition of his mere consent to a reconciliation. It was hoped, that when, in the prosecution of this plan, he came to be shown the entire and obstinate aversion of his heart to these merciful terms, he would perceive that this *hard doctrine*, as it is called, came to his relief, to afford him help, when otherwise he must have sunk into despair ; rather than to consider it as throwing an impediment in the way of his salvation.

commenced ; since it represents the Eternal Being as employing those unlimited attributes, described in the *first* Article, both to *devise* and *bring into existence* that system of creatures and events, which, as it was shown in the *second*, would serve to make the most perfect display of his glory, and secure the greatest possible sum of holiness and blessedness to the intelligent creation. Who, I ask, besides that Being, whose understanding is infinite, could determine in what way divine glory could be most advantageously displayed, and the good of the creation be best promoted ? And what is there, short of his universal and mighty working, which can make it certain that a system securing these happy results will actually go into operation ?

There are some, I know, who think the present Article has no concord with the *third*, which relates to the perfection of moral government. They say, How can God have a *secret will* different from his *revealed will* ? How can he decree or purpose one thing, and command another ? *The will of God*, as the phrase is most commonly used in the scriptures, means the same as that holy law which he has given to be a rule to guide the actions of his creatures. But when God is said to work all things after the counsel of his own will, it has no reference to the conformity of their actions to his prescribed rule, but refers to the purpose of his own mind in relation to all those events which he brings to pass. So when it is demanded, “ Who hath resisted his will ? ” the meaning is, who has frustrated his counsels and defeated his plans ? And it seems not to be pretended by the apostle, that his will, in this sense of the word, has ever been effectually resisted. Rom. ix. 18, 19. When it is said concerning the ten horns, that God put it into their hearts to fulfil his *will*, by giving their kingdom to the beast, it clearly refers to his purpose concerning this event, and not to their voluntary obedience to his revealed will. Rev. xvii. 17. The mere purpose of God concerning future events, whether secret or made known by predictions, forms no rule for our conduct. Though he early made known his purpose, that the descendants of Ham should be servants to their brethren, the sons of Shem and Japheth, still this furnishes no justification of African slavery. The *law of God* is our rule, our only rule ; and it is absurd for any one to pretend he knows not which he is under obligation to obey, the secret or the revealed will.

As to the actions of God himself, it is nothing against the holiness of his character, that they are regulated by his decree or purpose ; for, though this embraces that which we do from bad, as well as good motives, the motives which govern *his* mind are all of them good ; so that all which he does, both in forming and executing his purpose, is in perfect harmony with the spirit of that law which he has prescribed for the rule of our life. The decree, when considered as the act of the divine mind, is no less holy than the law. God was as holy in his determinate counsel concerning the crucifixion of his Son, and in causing it to go into operation, as he was in forbidding all that wickedness by which it was brought to pass. The created agents by whom the crucifixion was accomplished, were actuated by motives entirely repugnant to the moral law ; but His motives were in the most perfect accordance with it.

What has just been said concerning the agreement of this Article

with the *third*, will prepare the way for us to see that it has no disagreement with the *fourth*. If the counsel of God, as we have seen, extends to some particular acts of rebellion, such as the crucifixion of Christ, where is the difficulty of supposing it to extend to all? And if the *progress* of rebellion is in accordance with a divine counsel, why is not its *commencement*? It would be limiting the power of God, to say, absolutely, that he could not have prevented the apostacy of angels, or the apostacy of man. But, to say, he can not govern a world of moral agents without moral means, implies no other limitation of his power, than an inability to work contradictions. Nor does it imply any limitation of his power, to say, he can not govern them in the most perfect manner without making use of means that are the best adapted to this end. And his using the best adapted means must imply such things as these: his giving them the most perfect exhibition of his glorious perfections—of the beautiful nature of holiness, and his complacency in it; and the consequent deformity of sin, and his abhorrence of it—also their dependence on him for holiness and happiness, and their obligation to trust in him with all their heart, and to yield unceasing obedience to his commands. We have, therefore, no right to say, when the best display of the Creator's glory and the highest good of his creatures are taken into view, that it was possible to prevent the existence of apostacy. And we have reason to believe that his counsel was concerned in determining where it should begin, and how far it should proceed. Nor ought we to suppose that all divine agency was suspended, while this rebellion was projected; though there is a sense, and a dreadful one, in which it is proper to say, that those creatures who rebelled were *left to themselves*.

Whatever difficulty any may find in discovering the harmony between the present Article and that which treats of man's departure from God, I conclude all see its concordance with the one which stands next in our system, namely, a glorious provision for his recovery to the divine image and favor. How manifest it is that man's redemption is altogether the fruit of divine counsel and agency. One apostle, when speaking of the crucified Redeemer, calls him the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; and another explains his meaning by telling us, that he was verily foreordained before the foundation of the world. Rev. xiii. 8. 1 Pet. i. 20. Man's redemption, as it is presented to us in the word of God, seems not so properly a part of his original plan, as the *end* to which all the other parts are made subordinate. If the purpose of God, to suffer apostacy to enter the moral system, throw darkness around his throne, that darkness is now dispelled.

There is no disagreement between the decree and agency of God, and the *sixth* and *seventh* Articles, which relate to the free offer of salvation that is made to all, and rejected by all. It was evidently in the purpose of God, that the offer of salvation through Jesus Christ should be made to the Jews; and it was also in his purpose, that this offer should be wickedly rejected. When Paul and Barnabas were addressing the Jews at Antioch in Pisidia, they said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we



turn to the Gentiles. Here is the offer of salvation freely made, and on the part of the Jews, wickedly rejected. But were not the hand and counsel of God concerned in this matter, "according as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear unto this day?" Was it not evidently the purpose of God to make the casting away of the seed of Abraham, to become the means of the reconciling of the world? "Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid! but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles." Rom. xi. 11. Evil as well as good is included in God's plan; but good, and not evil, is the ultimate end of all his counsels. By the stumbling of the Jews, the God of Abraham had an end to accomplish, in which his soul delighted; but that desirable end was not the fall of the Jews, but the bringing of salvation to the Gentiles.

With the next *three* Articles the agreement is very obvious, viz. regeneration by the power of God,—the sovereignty of his grace displayed in the exertion of his power,—and the purpose of election according to which it was exerted. These doctrines are full of divine counsel and agency. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." "Of his own will begat he us." "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." "Called according to his purpose." Nothing is plainer than this, that regeneration is the result of the counsel and agency of the Lord Almighty.

This doctrine has an evident agreement with the *justification* and *certain perseverance* of all true believers; which are exhibited in the *eleventh* and *twelfth* Articles. It is the plan of the God of all grace, to justify freely all those who believe in Christ; and also, that these should not come again into condemnation. Now if he not only purposes, but also performs, how certain it is, that those whom he has justified, he will also glorify. If the Almighty did not possess sufficient power to give and preserve a holy character in his creatures, then those whom he has justified might fail of being glorified. But if he can make rebels submit in the day of his power; and by his power keep them through faith, then there is no difficulty in discovering the certainty of their perseverance.

This Article accords with the one which immediately precedes it, namely, the doctrine of the general judgment. God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness. This appointment of his wise counsel he will with his own hand accomplish. He will raise the dead by his own power. He will bring them all before his judgment seat. He will separate by his discerning eye and his strong hand, the righteous from the wicked; will pass sentence according to the things which are written in the books; and will carry his sentence into full execution, by receiving the righteous to the highest heaven, and by sending the wicked to the lowest hell.

#### REMARKS.

1. The doctrine of this Article is calculated to fill the enemies of God with dismay. How distressing it must be to those who hate God,

to know that his plans embrace not only all the movements of his friends, but also of his enemies : to know that when they gather themselves together to frustrate his counsels, they will actually fulfil them ; and to know that he will cause their wrath to praise him, and the remainder thereof, effectually restrain. See Isa. viii. 9, 10. Ps. lxxvi. 10. How confounding must it be to Satan, who has been so unwearied in his devices and efforts to oppose the kingdom of righteousness, to know, that with all his stratagems, he has never defeated one of the purposes of God, nor taken out of his hand a single elect creature, either among angels or men : to know moreover that God will gain additional glory by all those things which he has done to dishonor him ; and that his chosen ones will have their attachment increased, by all that wicked effort he has made, either to drive them from their allegiance, or prevent their return. This same truth which is calculated to shame the leader of the rebellion, is confounding to his adherents. God will show them all, that wherein they dealt proudly he was above them ; that his plan and controlling agency extended to every thing they spoke, wrote and did, in opposition to him and his friends. Although some of God's enemies seem to expect that this doctrine, should it happen to prove true, would do much to shield them from self-reproach, and give them courage, in hardening themselves against the Almighty, they will find themselves utterly disappointed, when the light of eternity shall be poured in upon them. They will then be convinced that a divine plan and agency comprehending all events, not excepting those in which their wicked plans and agency were concerned, are striking proofs of the unsearchable greatness and goodness of Him whom they hate. The reason why wicked men are displeased with this doctrine, is not because they consider it as an impediment to their reconciliation to the kingdom of righteousness, but because it shows them that their selfish plans must all be frustrated, and even be made to further the plans of infinite benevolence.

2. As the doctrine of this Article is confounding to God's enemies, so it is cheering to his friends. How cheering it must be, amidst all the reproaches heaped on them for their religion, and amidst all the discouragements they witness in regard to the cause of truth, that they can say, "Our God is in the heavens ; he hath done whatsoever he pleased." When the apostles had been arraigned as felons, for preaching in the name of Jesus, they being let go went to their own company and reported what their enemies had said to them. The whole company cordially joined in a solemn prayer, wherein they expressed their full conviction, that what the enemies of God had been doing, was nothing but what his hand and counsel determined before to be done. It comforts the children of God to hear their Father say, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." While they know it to be necessary for created intelligences to lay plans in relation to their own actions, they are comforted with the thought, that the Uncreated Intelligence has a great plan which comprehends all these actions. They rejoice in being assured, while "there are many devices in a man's heart, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." And when their own heart is devising its way, it is a pleasure to know, that the Lord directeth their steps. In proportion as their confidence in God is strengthened, by his love shed

abroad in their hearts, they are rendered happy by contemplating his counsel and agency, as extending to every thing great and minute in the works of creation and providence. Could they be made to believe that a single event took place not included in the divine plan, it would diminish their enjoyment, by weakening their confidence in God. Should they be told, that his decrees extend to all which he accomplishes immediately by his own hand and by unintelligent instruments, but not to those things accomplished by intelligent agents, such a view of the subject would be far from exciting that entire confidence in God, which it is both their duty and their happiness to exercise. They clearly perceive, that if his plan does not cover the whole ground, including what is done by other agents, as well as what he does directly with his own hand; and what is done by evil as well as good agents, his plan must be deficient and without consistency. They perceive such a concatenation in events, and such a connection of agencies, irrational and rational, good and evil, that nothing like a *system* of providence could be formed, which does not comprehend and direct all these agencies. Whatever difficulty they may feel in reducing all these events to one system, placed in the hand of one Supreme Agent, still they find the matter to be so represented in the word of God: nor can they conceive of any other view of the subject which appears either so consistent or so consoling.

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## A RETROSPECT OF PART I.

BEFORE we pass on to our second grand division, I wish to give more prominence to several thoughts which are suggested by this part of the work. These will be presented under three or four distinct heads of remark.

I. It is now made evident, that *Christian doctrines* are exhibited to us, in the inspired writings, as so many *facts*. In the Introduction it was remarked, that the scripture considers its doctrines, which claim our belief, as facts and not fables. And has not our attention to the preceding summary served to show the correctness of that remark? We must have perceived that the doctrines are exhibited to us, not as *theories* proposed for experiment; but as things that have an actual existence, and are therefore denominated *truths*; because they can no more be reversed, than a fact can become a fiction. This will apply to every doctrine in our series.

Surely the doctrine with which it commenced, is not proposed as a theory, but as an immensely solemn reality. "There is one God." "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." Nor is it intimated, that it any more belongs to us to form a *character* for the Deity, than to give him existence. His existence and his character are independent



of our theorizing. A thousand different characters may be invented and ascribed to him; but he is not altered by these inventions of ours. "He is in one mind, and who can turn him?" If the sentiments we entertain concerning him agree with the reality, they are the truth; otherwise they are error.

The terms *truth* and *fact* are applicable to every other scriptural doctrine, as much as to the existence and character of God. If the doctrines, which are contained in the preceding Articles, are such as are authorized by the scriptures, they are so many facts. The scriptures do not reveal it as an ingenious theory, that *a dependent universe is a possible event*; and that it might owe its origin and preservation to the wisdom, power, and benevolence of God. No, they state it as a fact, that such a universe is actually in existence; and that to the God of Israel belongs all the glory of originating and preserving it.

The *moral government* of God is no more proposed as a theory than his existence and attributes. The scriptures never speak of it as though it were left to us to decide, whether the LORD should reign over us. No form of a constitution is sent down to us to modify, and then adopt or reject, as we shall think proper. The scriptures declare the fact, that "the LORD is king forever;" and that "his kingdom ruleth over all." Ps. x. 16; ciii. 19. His law is enacted and promulgated, with its solemn sanctions annexed, and even now it is the rule of his administration.

*Rebellion against the government of God*, is not exhibited in the scriptures as a thing which might occur somewhere in his dominions, and in some period of duration: on the contrary, it is mentioned as a real occurrence; and the time when and place where it first broke out are specified. What is said concerning the universal extent and entireness of the defection of *Adam's* race, is treated of as matter of fact, which our belief or disbelief will no more alter, than it will our very existence. On the subject of human depravity, the scriptures furnish no theories. On this, as well as other subjects, men will adopt such sentiments as they please; but this is certain, there is but one sentiment which will be supported by the word of God, or by existing facts.

The doctrine of *atonement for sin*, is also here presented to us, not as a theory, but as a reality. It is not announced to us, that our offended Sovereign has an intention of providing some remedy for his rebellious creatures in this lower world, some expiation for their sin; and that he wishes to consult with them, concerning the person and qualifications of him that shall become the expiatory sacrifice. The fact is announced, that God has provided himself a lamb—that he has laid help upon One that is mighty—and that there is no other name given under heaven amongst men whereby we must be saved. Ps. lxxxix. 19. Acts iv. 12. It is not now left for us to decide the question, whether we need an atonement, and if any, whether we need one greater than can be made by a sinless man, or an incarnate seraph. The question is already decided by Him, from whose decision there is no appeal, that without the shedding of blood sin can never be remitted: nor is the decision less absolute, that it must be the blood of Immanuel, God manifest in the flesh. Heb. ix. 22. Acts xx. 28.

The *free offer* which the gospel presents to every one of the human

race, through the atonement of Christ, is another fact. It is no fiction, no pretence, but a blessed reality. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. Whosoever will may take of the water of life freely."

Nor is it less a matter of fact, that *every man is naturally disposed to reject this gracious offer*. It is revealed to us, not as a mere probability, but as a certainty, that this is the reception the gospel offer will receive among the unregenerated all over the world. The sacred history adds confirmation to this view of the unregenerate character. To dispute against it, then, is not to oppose an ingenious hypothesis, but to deny scripture statements in regard to matters of fact.

The doctrine of *regeneration by the agency of the Spirit of God* on the sinner's heart, effectually removing his opposition to a cordial reconciliation, is presented to us in the scriptures, not as a speculative point—not as though such a divine agency would be sufficient to account for the subjugation of the rebellious heart; but it is exhibited to us as the only way in which it ever has been or ever will be subjugated. Have any of the children of men become the sons of God? then we know they have experienced a birth, which is not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. John i. 12, 13.

Divine *sovereignty*, in conferring the grace of regeneration, if revealed at all, is not revealed as a theory, but as a fact. We are not told that God might, if he pleased, act the part of the potter, in forming vessels for glory and for destruction; but that this is what he is actually doing: "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Rom. ix. 18.

Nor is the *election* of grace any more hypothetical than its sovereignty. It is not proposed to us as a matter of inquiry, whether God might not possibly have had a determination, just what success to give to the proclamation of pardon through the redemption of his Son: but as a weighty truth, that such a determination has always had existence in his holy mind. While men are disputing the matter, whether it be right for God to have a purpose concerning the salvation of one sinner more than another, the fact exists. He does not wait for us to become agreed on the question; but is continually drawing those to his Son, who were given to him before the foundation of the world." Whom he did predestinate, them he also called."

The doctrine of *justification through the atonement of Christ*, in distinction from justification by the deeds of the law, is presented to us in the scripture as a system which is in operation; and as the only one by which any of our fallen race ever have been, or can be freed from a state of condemnation. "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." 2 Cor. 5. 18.

The *certain perseverance in holiness of all those who are born of God*, is exhibited to us in the scriptures as having all the reality of an event. It is not, that the covenant of grace might be so ordered in all things, as to insure the salvation of such as are brought within the compass of its promises; but that so it is ordered: it is not that they might be, but that they "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." 3 Sam. xxiii. 5. 1 Pet. i. 5.

The *resurrection of the dead*, the *day of judgment*, and the *sentence of approbation to be passed upon the righteous*, and of *condemnation upon the*

wicked, are scenes which are yet future, but no less real than if they were now passing before us. The word has already gone out of the mouth of Him who is the faithful and true Witness, that "the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they who have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." No one who has read the scriptures with the least attention, can view the doctrine of the resurrection, followed with the judgment, and the rewards of eternity, as anything less than a most solemn reality.

Nor is the Article which closes our doctrinal series, exhibited to us in the scriptures as any more problematical than those which precede it. The representation is not, that God might, had he seen fit, have laid a plan which should have embraced all that he has made, and all the events that have come to pass; and that, if he had pleased, he might have carried such a plan into execution: but it is exhibited to us as an incontrovertible fact, that such a plan has actually been laid, and is steadily going into operation—that *God is working all things after the counsel of his own will*.

We are now better prepared than we were in our outset, to see why the scriptures make such frequent use of the word *truth*, in application to the doctrines they reveal. They exhibit these doctrines as realities—as so many existing facts. Mere theories may be received or rejected, as shall suit our fancy or convenience; but facts are true, whether believed or disbelieved. Nor does our belief or disbelief have any influence in rendering them more or less real. Christianity is presented to us in the scriptures as an infinitely interesting reality; and every doctrinal proposition, which this religion contains, is intended to make known to us some important fact concerning the attributes, designs, and works of God. The preacher of the gospel is therefore considered as nothing more than a *reporter* of facts. See 1 Pet. i. 12.

It ought to be understood by every theological student, and indeed by every candidate for the retributions of eternity, that the inspired word, "the word of truth," does not present us with a number of religious *theories*, giving each of us his choice, to select from among them the one which shall best agree with his preconceived opinions, or which shall be most congenial to his taste: but it presents us with a connected system of *facts*, concerning the Eternal Being, and his dominion over his works, especially his intelligent creatures—concerning the ruined condition of man, together with the provision made for his redemption, and the everlastingly happy or wretched consequences of an acceptance or a rejection of the proffered mercy. This system of facts, which constitute "sound doctrine," or "the doctrine which is according to godliness," we are required to believe; because it is founded in truth, and supported by the most ample divine testimony.

II. *It becomes us as Christians, and even as believers in the divine origin of the Christian religion, to employ ourselves to harmonize those things in the Bible, which at the first glance seem discordant, rather than to set one truth in array against another, to make the invader destroy the life of its fellow.* We ought to suffer them all to live in peace and harmony; for it is their nature so to do. Let the reader be reminded,



that it is not his work, nor mine, to tell what the scripture *should have said*, but rather to understand what it *has said*. And it belongs to one as much as to the other, to endeavor to reconcile the seeming contrarieties which are found in this acknowledged standard of truth. This is both our duty and interest. What good can it do the reader, any more than the writer, to disturb the harmony of the Christian doctrines? This will have no tendency to promote our salvation; which must be effected by the sanctification of the Spirit, and *belief of the truth*.

Nothing is more common than to find professed believers in divine revelation, who select from among the truths revealed, which of them they will believe: and not only so, but they will make these selected truths the instruments with which to oppose others, that are revealed with equal clearness. A few examples of this will now be given.

In the scriptures, *punishing justice*, and *pardoning mercy*, are both ascribed to God. But, instead of seeking to harmonize these attributes, it is the manner of some, to make use of the one to destroy the other. They will tell you, they do not believe it to be consistent with the character of God to punish sin; for they believe in a God of mercy. Instead, however, of making use of the attribute of mercy to cast contempt on that vindicatory justice, which also belongs to God, let us receive scriptural testimony in favor of both, and rest satisfied that there is no real disagreement between them.

How often do we hear one and another saying, "I do not believe men are dependent on God for their exercises of heart, because the scripture represents them to be free agents, who make their own choice." It is here taken for granted, that both these can not be true. But why is this taken for granted? The *voluntary agency* of men is taught in the sacred volume; but their *dependent agency* is also as clearly taught. Others there are who say, they believe that men are dependent on God for their volitions, and therefore they do not believe they are free agents. This reasoning is no more unscriptural than the other. In both cases, one truth of God's word is made use of to destroy another which corresponds with it. How much more becoming it would be for us, "unto whom the word of God came," to receive upon such infallible testimony both these truths, with this conclusion; that if we can not perceive their agreement, still it may be intuitively clear to Him whose understanding is infinite.

"I do not believe, says one, that God has determined all things that take place; for it is certain that men are often blamed for not acting otherwise than they do; but if God has decreed their actions, how could they act otherwise?" In the case of the crucifixion of the Savior, is it not as unequivocally declared, that it was done according to *the determinate counsel of God*, and by *the wicked hands of men*? Acts ii. 23. Both these truths are taught with great plainness and frequency throughout the volume of inspiration; why, then, are they not received with equal credit? And why is one taken to oppose the other?

Some say, "sinners are not under obligation to repent and believe, because it is the work of God to give repentance and faith." Others say, "sinners are under obligation to repent and believe, therefore repentance and faith can not be the gift of God." But what saith the

scripture? "God commandeth all men every where to repent." "Then hath God also to the gentiles granted repentance unto life." "And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ." "For unto you it is *given*, in the behalf of Christ, to *believe* on his name." Acts xvii. 30; xi. 18. 1 John, iii. 23. Phil. 1. 29. According to these passages, we know that it is the duty of men to repent and believe, because they are commanded of God to do these things: and this is proof enough of their obligation to comply. We know also that repentance and faith are the gift of God; for this also is positively and clearly asserted. And what right has any one to say, that both these can not be true?

There are some who say, they believe there is a free offer of salvation made to all men, and therefore they do not believe in particular election. Others, through a professed attachment to the doctrine of election, oppose a general and indiscriminate offer of salvation. But why shall we not believe them both? They are both revealed; and, for aught I can perceive, with equal clearness. Why, then, shall we do that in relation to Christian doctrines, which the apostle dissuaded the Corinthians from doing in relation to Christian ministers, namely, to be *puffed up for one against another*? It is not our proper business to determine between two of the doctrines of revelation, which of them to believe. Our duty is to believe them both; and to employ our reasoning powers to discover their agreement. If in any case we are unable, through our unavoidable ignorance of the infinitude of divine attributes, or the manner of divine operation, to discover an agreement between two doctrines, which are both plainly revealed, it becomes us to rest satisfied, that an agreement exists, though it be not discovered by us. There are undoubtedly many things that to our circumscribed minds may appear obscure, and even contradictory, which to the Omniscient Mind are perfectly light, having no darkness at all.

III. Since much of the heresy with which the church in every age has been corrupted, is built on this, as if it were a self-evident axiom, *That free agency, and absolute dependence on God for the exercise of that agency, can not both be true*, it seems expedient to pay some additional attention to a subject of so much importance. Though it was included, among other particulars, under the foregoing Remark, I trust the reader will bear with me in giving it a greater prominence by a distinct consideration.

I would here ask, whether it be not easy to perceive, that the pride of man (and, like Moab, "he is very proud,") presents an obstacle to a fair investigation of this subject? Is it not manifestly the nature of pride, to be displeased with a state of *dependence*? The dialect which is most natural to pride, is that of self-sufficiency: "We are lords, we will come no more to thee." "Our lips are our own, who is Lord over us?" The pride of Pharaoh made him call the Nile his own: "My river is mine own, and I made it for myself." The haughty spirit of Nebuchadnezzar led him to say, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" Under the influence of pride, the wise man glories in his wisdom, and the mighty man in his might, and the rich man in his riches; just as though this wisdom, power,

and wealth, were independently their own. Now if it is the nature of pride, to assume the attitude of independence, in relation to mere intellectual and corporeal endowments, and those outward blessings with which Providence has favored us, we can easily perceive that its tendency must be to render us self-sufficient in relation to our *virtues*; inducing us to esteem them as our own, in the most exclusive sense, as being not only *in ourselves*, but *of ourselves*. Since pride aspires to universal independence, and especially in that which we call our *goodness*, it has manifestly a predisposition to fall in with the scheme of self-sufficient agency, or what is termed *the self-determining power of the will*. So far, then, as pride bears sway in our minds, it presents a mighty obstacle to a fair and impartial investigation of this subject. At least, its tendency must be strong to produce an aversion to that scheme of doctrine, which represents man to be, *in every respect, a dependent creature*. If, then, that scheme be the one which is founded in truth, it evidently does not stand an equal chance to gain credit, as it would do in a world where pride is unknown.

That we are free moral agents, performing actions which render us either amiable or unamiable, worthy of praise or blame, is satisfactorily proved by such arguments as these :

(1.) Every man is *conscious of being a free accountable agent*. He can not avoid making an entire distinction between the voluntary motions of his will, and the involuntary motion of the blood in his veins. He passes judgment concerning the right and wrong of his own actions.

(2.) Every man is *constrained to view his fellow men around him as free moral agents*. He therefore approves or blames them, according to the uprightness or perverseness of their conduct. All the governments which exist on earth, from the government of a family or school up to that of a state or kingdom, serve to show that the sentiment is universal; that men are free actors, and that they are responsible for their actions.

(3.) It is also manifest that *God treats us as free accountable agents*; which he would not do if we were not such in reality. He has given us a law, consisting of requirements and prohibitions, accompanied with moral sanctions. Since our transgression of this law, he has provided an atonement by the death of his Son, which he invites us to receive. He bids us "choose life." And they who are saved are represented as actually doing it. See Luke x. 42. They are represented as repenting, believing, and turning to the Lord; also, as holding on their way, and keeping themselves in the love of God; and as receiving at last an acknowledgment from their Judge, that they had been good and faithful servants. Now if these, and similar representations, which are made on every page of the sacred volume, do not establish the doctrine of man's voluntary and accountable agency, I can not see how it is possible it should be established.

I know that with some, this proof of *free agency*, is so much proof against an agency which is *dependent on God*. But I would ask, Will the same kind of arguments which serve to establish our freedom, disprove our dependence? For example, I have shown that every man is conscious that he is free. But surely no one can pretend he is con-



scious that he is not also dependent. That you act freely is a thing of which you may easily be conscious: but I cannot see how you can be conscious of acting independently. The Supreme Agent can undoubtedly work in you, in such a manner as to elude your perception of his agency. He moves the planets, and causes the grass to grow; but if these parts of his works were possessed of sensation, there is no reason to think they would perceive they were operated upon. In his intelligent creatures God may work both to will and to do; and yet they remain unconscious of any thing besides their own volitions and actions. The necessity of his special agency to draw forth right affections, often becomes very apparent to the minds of men who are involved in such deep depravity, that numberless motives and those of the weightiest kind, have proved ineffectual to this end. But even in this case, when the needed agency is exerted, it is altogether unperceived in those minds which are transformed by it, except as it is discovered by its happy fruits. See John iii. 8.

Perhaps some may say, "There can not be two agents employed in the same action, and yet both of them be free. The writer and his pen can not both be free agents in forming letters and words." To this I would reply, if a writer had power to give his pen a knowledge of the good sentiments he was wishing to commit to paper, and to cause his pen to be as cordial as himself in making the record, I do not see why there might not be two agents engaged in performing the same action; and yet both of them be free and praise-worthy. The doctrine of dependent agency does not, in the strictest sense, represent the same action as performed by two different agents. It does not represent God to be the *actor* of our actions. As the Supreme Efficient, he is the cause of our actions; but as the *doer* he is not the cause. He is free in causing us to act, and we are no less free in acting. When he first made intelligent creatures, it is certain that he alone could exercise any choice in their coming into existence; but as soon as they existed, they found themselves to be free agents, possessing a holy character. They were not God himself, but were, in the most absolute sense, the work of his hands, the creatures of his power. Now since the great First Cause had skill and power to originate free moral agents, and to give them a character when he gave them their being, why should we imagine it to be a thing beyond the limit of his skill and power, to keep them always as dependent, as they must have been on their first entrance into the moral system? And who can say that their dependence for preservation is not as *necessary* as for existence itself? Or that their dependence for *continued voluntary action* is not as necessary and as complete as for its commencement?

If dependence on God for the acts of the will, stand opposed to the freedom and accountability of those acts, it follows as a legitimate consequence, that nothing will secure their perfect freedom, short of an entire independence of the will. Were we so to frame our doctrinal system, as to diminish the dependence of the will, in the smallest degree, for the sake of avoiding the Antinomian heresy, we could not stop short of Arminianism of the rankest kind. On the other hand, should we undertake to diminish the freedom of the will, for the sake of avoiding the Arminian heresy, we shall be crowded into the other extreme. In

case a *perfect freedom* of the will be considered as destroying dependence, a *small degree* of freedom must weaken it. So on the other hand, should the most perfect dependence of the will on God, be considered as destroying its freedom, the smallest degree of dependence must in this case impair and abridge it. We may therefore safely conclude, that if the human will be at all dependent on God for its exercises, the most entire dependence has no tendency to destroy, nor to diminish its freedom.

But let us now turn our attention more directly to what God himself has said on this subject. Surely he must have a perfect knowledge of his own agency and that of his creatures. I shall only place before the reader a few of the heads of scriptural proof, by which the doctrine of a *dependent agency* is supported.

First. The *heart* of man, the seat of all his voluntary exercises, is declared to be *in the hand of the Lord, and to be turned at his pleasure*. While a man's heart is said to devise his way, (which implies his free agency,) the Lord is represented to be directing his steps; and this shows that his agency is as dependent as it is free. While the apostle taught the saints at Philippi their obligation to work out their own salvation, he informed them of their dependence on God to work in them both to *will* and to do. Prov. xxi. 1; xvi. 1, 9. Phil. ii. 13. I would now ask, In case man's agency is as entirely dependent on God as the Calvinistic system supposes it to be, would not such language as is used in these and similar passages be well calculated to express it?

Secondly. The entire dependence of human agency, is proved by those passages which represent *God as having power to effect a radical change in the heart of any sinner at his pleasure*. But as this argument was pursued to some length, when treating on the subject of regeneration, I shall content myself with merely stating it in this place; and will pass on.

Thirdly. The certainty with which the scriptures speak of *the preservation of a holy character, in the whole company of the regenerate*, is well calculated to convince us that God has a supreme control over their hearts; or, in other words, that their agency is dependent on him. The number of the regenerated, from the beginning to the end of the world, will be very great; and yet not one of all this multitude will fail of persevering in holiness, unto the end of his probation. This circumstance would naturally lead us to understand what is said, concerning their being "*kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation*," to imply an influence more *immediate* and infallibly effectual than mere moral suasion, by whatever agent (human or divine) it might be presented.

Fourthly. The assurance which the scriptures give us of *the continuance of the church of God, from the beginning to the end of the world, without undergoing the least suspension of its existence*, seems naturally to induce the belief that man's agency is dependent on the all-controlling agency of the Almighty. The Redeemer is assured that a seed shall serve him, which shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation; and that his name shall endure forever, and be continued as long as the sun. Being thus assured of the perpetuity of his church, by an un-

broken succession of sanctified ones, he boldly declares, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Ps. xxii. 30 ; lxxii. 17. Matt. xvi. 18. But what can render it certain that the church, God's kingdom on earth, shall never undergo a suspension of its existence? It has often been well nigh extinct. In the time of Noah it was reduced within the narrow compass of one family : and if its Divine Head were not able to exert an irresistible influence, directly on the hearts of men, we do not see what could render it certain, that a time might not come, when not a single family, nor an individual, should be on the Lord's side.

Fifthly. The scripture prophecies relating to *the introduction of that period of universal holiness, which we call the Millenium*, furnish a weighty argument in support of the sentiment in question. After our world has been for six thousand years in a state of dreadful revolt from God, waxing worse and worse ; continually becoming more idolatrous, atheistical, and wicked ; it is then, within a short period, to undergo a great and general reform. And how is this mountain, whose frightful head has been rising higher and higher for ages, so soon to be leveled and made a plain? Not by human might nor power, but by the Spirit of the Lord. Zech. iv. 6, 7. That a nation, yea, that all nations should now be born at once, can not be adequately accounted for in any other way, except that, which supposes God's power over rebellious hearts to be absolutely irresistible ; that he quickens whom he will ; and that he now wills to quicken a world dead in trespasses and sins.

Sixthly. *The everlasting stability which is given to the holiness of the inhabitants of heaven*, supplies us with a strong argument in favor of the doctrine of dependent agency. It is evident from the scriptures, that none of the inhabitants of heaven, whether elect angels or redeemed men, will ever depart from God, or indulge an affection of heart which is not in the most perfect conformity to his law. If these creatures were to be left to the mere influence of moral means, and a self-determining power of the will, how could their everlasting establishment in holiness be made so perfectly sure? How soon did the devil and his angels, and the first parents of our race, fall from a state of entire innocence. And what a propensity there is in the saints, so long as they continue on the earth, to backslide from God. How constantly do pride and other selfish affections spring up in their hearts to defile them. Now I ask, in what way shall it be accounted for, that creatures, who in the present state are so prone to forsake God, and to be puffed up with pride, should in the future state never forsake him, nor ever be troubled with the least rising of pride in their hearts? In what way, except by adopting the sentiment, That the all-sufficient God exerts a direct and unremitting agency on their minds, great enough to give entire efficacy to these means of sanctification (i. e. of preserving their sanctified character) which they will then enjoy?

I have never yet seen it proved to be among things possible, that the Creator should give existence to any thing, whether it be matter or mind, which shall have self-motion, independent of his constant agency. An artist, I know, can fabricate a machine, which shall operate after it has gone out of his hands, and he has nothing more to do with it. The reason for this is plain : he avails himself of what are called



the laws of nature ; which are nothing else but the systematic operations of the Supreme Agent. But on whom could the Supreme Agent rely to support the existence and direct the motions of his works, were he to drop them from his own hands ? Since the universe furnishes no one who is able to do this, does it not become a matter of necessity, that the Creator of the world should uphold all things by the word of *his own power* ? Heb. 1. 3. Might we not as well suppose all things to come into existence without an exertion of his power, as to continue without its exertion ? Or are the works of God any less dependent on him for their *motions*, than for the continuance of their existence ? And why should not this dependence extend to the motions of *minds*, as well as to those of material bodies ? Why is it not as rational to believe, that the minds of men should not be sufficient of themselves to *think anything as of themselves*, as that their bodies should not be furnished with the power of independent motion ? 2 Cor. iii. 5.

The scriptures represent the Infinite Spirit as being very near to us, not only in his essential ubiquity, but also in his constant agency. They not only show us the works which he finished ages before we were born, but also the works which he is doing before our eyes. The psalmist, in establishing the doctrine of God's omnipresence, interweaves with it the doctrine of his present efficient operation. "If," said he, "I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, even there shall thy hand *lead* me, and thy right hand shall *hold* me." Ps. cxxxix. 9, 10. But how would he know that the hand of God led him to this retreat ? The only proof he suggests is this ; that he himself would be there. But if he had been an automaton ; if his movements had been independent of a constant divine agency, his being present in the uttermost part of the sea, would amount to no proof that God also was there. The ground he assumed was, that he could not go to this distant isle of the sea, unless God should lead him thither, nor remain there, unless his hand should uphold him.

The philosophy of the scriptures, different from that of many of the schools, leads us to recognize a divine agency in all which takes place. It often overlooks subordinate causes, and shows us the great First Cause as working all in all. It leads us to view the creation, as not only coming *from* his hand, but as remaining *in* it ; and therefore dependent as much for its preservation, as for its existence. "*In his hand*," said David, "are the deep places of the earth." "*In whose hand*," said Job, "is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind." "*In whose hand*," said Daniel to Belshazzar, "thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways." "*For in him*," said Paul, "we live, and move, [*are moved, Gr.*] and have our being." If the work of providence did not imply a continued divine operation, I can not see the force of the argument, by which Christ vindicated himself from the charge of sabbath profanation, in healing the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda : "My Father," said he, "worketh hitherto, and I work." This was as much as to say, "My Father, though he rested from the work of creation at the end of six days, does of necessity, as the God of providence, work on all days, not excepting the holy sabbath : and I, as united with him in the providential care of the world, work also."

If universal dependence, through the material and intellectual creation had not been, as it is, in the very nature of things necessary, still it must have appeared to such as love God and are friendly to the best interests of his moral kingdom, a very desirable thing; since nothing short of this universal dependence of his creatures would give him opportunity to do all he wished, to declare his glory, and gratify his benevolence in doing them good. Had anything existed in the creation, which was, in the least degree, independent of the Creator, he could never have said, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do *all my pleasure*." That creatures should exist who are intelligent free agents, is not only desirable, but absolutely necessary to the declaration of the divine glory; or to give any importance to the work of creation: but in case it had been possible, it could not have been desirable, that one of them should have been a moral automaton—that one of them should have been so constructed, as to be able to act independently of Him, whose understanding and goodness are so unbounded and immutable, as to render it certain that he will always manage the concerns of the moral system in the very best manner.

Some may say, "It is far from our intention to ascribe the least degree of independence to creatures, or circumscribe the operations of the Supreme Agent: all we wish is to have it understood, that the influence which he exerts upon the minds of his creatures is a *mere moral* influence. And of what importance is it, in relation to the independence of the Most High, to determine in what way he operates on them, whether by *direct* influence, or merely by *motives*, provided he has power to guide and control their volitions and determinations?" To this I would reply, Experience has proved it to be a matter of great importance: for the sentiments of those who deny any direct influence, and consider God as having no power to reach the mind, except by the force of motives, have always led them to doubt of his perfect control over a world of minds; and it is believed they always will lead to this result. By their sentiments they are very naturally led to doubt, whether God has such power that he can renew the heart of any sinner he pleases; whether he can, without exceeding that moral influence to which they suppose him necessarily confined, keep every renewed soul from apostacy; and whether it is within the compass of things which are possible, for him to devise and execute a plan of providence embracing all the actions of voluntary agents.

Let me entreat my readers not to throw themselves into two classes, the one believing in man's free agency, and the other in his entire dependence on God. Why may I not rather hope, they will all unite to believe in both? Let no one say, It is impossible that both should be true; since they have equal support from "the scripture of truth." If they are true when viewed apart, they are true when combined. Nor are they mere speculations, but are truths which are calculated to produce the happiest practical results. Am I a free agent? then I have something to do; and it behooves me to inquire what it is, and to set myself about it, and conduct like one who expects to give account. Am I dependent on God for a holy character? then it becomes me to be little in my own eyes; to adopt *prayer* as one of my duties, and to

work out my salvation with fear and trembling; depending on his Spirit to work in me that which is pleasing in his sight.

IV. It is worthy of particular notice, that in the gospel scheme of salvation there are *two prominent doctrines*, which may properly be considered as the pillars that support the fabric of grace: I refer to *justification* and *sanctification*. The existence of God, his works of creation and providence, and his moral government, are more fundamental to the system of *divine truth*; but they are not doctrines which are peculiar to the *gospel*. Nor is the doctrine of depravity, nor that which relates to the final judgment and the retributions of eternity; nor that which relates to divine counsels and agency. These doctrines would be true, if there were no salvation for apostates. But among those, which are *peculiarly* the doctrines of the gospel, the two which I have named are the most distinguished. "How can the transgressor of the law be freed from that penalty which he has incurred? How can he be cleansed from that depravity with which he is corrupted?" The first of these difficulties is removed by understanding the doctrine of justification; and the other by understanding the doctrine of sanctification: I now use the word sanctification in its largest sense, so as to include the *beginning* as well as the progress of deliverance from sin.

If these are eminently the pillars on which gospel salvation rests, it is highly important we should form a right conception of them. That man can have no correct system of faith, whose views of either of these doctrines are fundamentally wrong. There is one thing in relation to both of them, which the scriptures have made very plain; it is this: *that deliverance from the penalty of the law, and also from the dominion of sin, is accomplished in such a way as to render us entire debtors to GRACE.* The apostle says to the saints at Ephesus, "By *grace* are ye saved:" and concerning himself he says, "By *the grace of God* I am what I am." Eph. ii. 8. 1 Cor. xv. 10. The grace of God is equally manifest in both of these branches of our salvation. Nothing can be more evident than the grace displayed in that branch of our salvation which consists in deliverance from the curse of the law, or our justification unto life. The two following passages will be sufficient to establish this point: "Being justified freely by his *grace*, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." "That, being justified by his *grace*, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Rom. iii. 24. Tit. iii. 7. Our justification is by grace; since it is not at all by our personal deserts, either in obeying or suffering; but altogether by virtue of the obedience and sufferings of our Substitute, that we obtain freedom from condemnation. Grace reigns unto eternal life through righteousness—not our own, but of Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Our deliverance from sin* is no less a matter of pure grace, than our freedom from the penalty of the law. It was this branch of salvation the apostle had his eye upon, when he said to the Ephesians, *By grace ye are saved*: and when he told the Galatians that "God, who separated him from his mother's womb, *called him by his grace.*" The reason why this transformation is represented to be all of grace, is not because the new character in which it results is not as much our own as if we had always possessed it: neither is it because it does not



render us as truly amiable as if we had acquired it without special help from God. It is of grace, because it is not of *ourselves*, but is the gift of God. We neither did it ourselves, nor deserved it should be done for us. God wrought it in us when we were dead in sins, and had made no approach toward a holy character; nor done anything to claim his interposition in our behalf. "The Spirit quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." This holy calling is declared to be "not according to our works." "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Tit. iii. 5. See also Eph. ii. 4—10.

The temple of grace needs both these pillars for its support; and he who does anything to take from either of them that *gracious character* by which they are adapted to sustain such an edifice, exposes it to fall. He, for example, who divests the doctrine of *justification* of that free grace, which the scriptures ascribe to it, and builds it on a different foundation from the righteousness of God, does that which is directly calculated to effect its demolition. And is not this equally true of him, who makes our *sanctification* depend on man's free will, instead of God's free Spirit? Leave the elect to themselves, or to dependent agents for their redemption from iniquity, and they will as certainly fail of salvation, as if they were to be left to redeem themselves from the curse of the law. They need the *Spirit's influence* to effect the one, as much as they do the *blood of Christ* to effect the other. Hence it appears that the Unitarians, who divest the Trinity of two of the divine Persons, are chargeable with taking away both pillars which support the scheme of grace. If they should tell us, they acknowledge the existence of the Son as much as of the Father; and ask of what importance it can be to them to believe in his equality, or in his vicarious sufferings, provided they do but acknowledge, that *in some way he is the Savior of men*, the Orthodox would unanimously reply; We view the atonement as lying at the foundation of the religion of the gospel, and the proper deity of Christ at the foundation of the atonement; therefore we can not consent to have an article, so fundamental to the gospel, expressed in such vague language that it may import, either that Christ by dying in our room satisfies divine justice, and thus saves us from a deserved punishment; or that, though a mere man, he by his instructions and examples saves us from our vices and greatly improves our virtues. If we lose sight of the *way* in which Christ saves lost men, we shall be apt to lose sight of the *grace* of their salvation. When it is considered as a matter of little consequence, whether their salvation be procured by a mere man, or the GOD-MAN; whether by vicarious sufferings, or merely by good instructions and beneficent acts, it will also be considered as of little consequence whether it be of grace or of works.

If wrong views of the way, in which Christ redeems us from the penalty of the law, tend to destroy that grace which the scriptures attribute to our justification, why may not wrong views of the way in which *the Spirit sanctifies us*, have a tendency to destroy the grace which they attach to our sanctification? Some may think it enough, that they acknowledge the work of renewing and sanctifying the mind

is effected by the Spirit, without saying anything concerning the manner of his doing it. But why may it not be as necessary for us to know something concerning the manner in which the Spirit accomplishes his work, to enable us rightly to understand the grace of God in regeneration, as it is to know something of the manner in which the Redeemer accomplishes his work, in order to give us a proper view of the grace displayed in justification? If, after we have acknowledged that our deliverance from sin is effected by the agency of the Spirit, we represent this to be nothing more than the influence of the word which he inspired, or of the ministry which he has provided and sustained; or if we should speak of him as exerting no different agency on the minds of sinners, from that which we attribute to men and other dependent agents, do we not lower the official work of the Holy Ghost; much as the Unitarians do the work of the Redeemer? If Christ saves men merely by his teaching and example, others have done the same: but if he saves them by making a full atonement for their sins, it is a work peculiar to himself. So if the Spirit saves men by the mere presentation of motives and arguments to their minds, other agents have done this, and are doing it continually. But if he takes the man, with whom the strongest arguments have proved ineffectual, and, by an operation peculiar to himself, transforms his rebellious heart into the image of God; then is it true, that salvation from sin by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, is as completely a matter of grace, as deliverance from punishment by the death of Christ. And if this special and unmerited operation of the Holy Ghost is that on which we are to make our whole dependence for the preservation and perfection of the renovated character, just as we are forever to depend on the righteousness of God our Savior for our freedom from the condemnation of the law, then is our whole salvation, from sin as well as from punishment, a matter of grace; being not of ourselves, but the gift of God.

In the opinion of Luther, the sentiments which are entertained on the subject of *justification*, serve as a true index to determine, concerning the church of Christ, whether it be in a steadfast or declining state. The correctness of this opinion will perhaps be questioned by few except Unitarians. And I would now seriously ask, whether Luther's opinion concerning the importance of justification, may not be applied with equal propriety to sanctification, the other pillar doctrine which we have now considered? Was not the heresy of Pelagius as subversive of the humbling religion of Jesus Christ, as that of Arius? Milner, in his Church History, says, "In Augustine's time the question turned principally upon *sanctification*, in Luther's time on *justification*, yet the glory of God in the grace of Jesus Christ, the importance of genuine faith, and the nature and efficacy of the influences of the Holy Ghost, were equally concerned in the controversy between Augustine and Pelagius, between Luther and the Papists, and I will venture to say, on scriptural grounds, between Paul the apostle and Saul of Tarsus,—that is, between the spirit and doctrine of an humbled publican, and a self-righteous Pharisee."

[In connection with the quotation from Milner, I wish to recommend to every reader who has it in his power, carefully to examine his *History of the Church of Christ*, particularly in relation to the Pelagian controversy. If any one should say, that he read it some years ago, I would suggest to him the importance of reading it again. I think a re-perusal may lead him to see its remarkable adaptation to the present exigences of the church. I would also take the liberty of proposing to some Tract Society, or ecclesiastical body, the plan of publishing in a tract form, the substance of his *third* and *fourth* chapters of *Century 5th*. These two chapters, containing the Pelagian controversy and documents, occupy nearly thirty pages in the second American edition, published at Boston. The cost of such a tract would be but trifling; while the good it might do, in counteracting any existing tendencies to Pelagianism, who can calculate?]





THE HARMONY  
OF  
DIVINE TRUTH.

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PART II.

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EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION

SHOWN TO BE HARMONIOUS IN ALL ITS VARIOUS BRANCHES; ALSO  
HARMONIOUS WITH THE DOCTRINAL SYSTEM, PARTICULARLY AS EX-  
HIBITED UNDER PART I.

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Before I proceed to divide this Article into its separate branches, I shall detain the reader for a few moments with some

GENERAL REMARKS ON EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION.

THE second grand division of divine truth relates to the *affections of the heart*. This is usually denominated *experimental* religion. When any science, which has been studied as a theory, comes to be tested by experience, the knowledge thus acquired is said to be experimental. While I only look at the honey-comb, or hear others who have eaten of it describe its sweetness, the knowledge I have of it is gained by reasoning, or depends on testimony; but as soon as I proceed to taste it myself, it becomes *experience*. It is in quite a new sense that I can now say, *I know that honey is sweet*. The knowledge which many have of the gospel, is like that of untasted honey; or like the philosophy of some theorizing chimist, who has never tested one of his principles by an experiment. Yet some there are, who have not only heard and reasoned on the subject of religion; they have also *tasted and seen that the Lord is good*. Ps. xxxiv. S. The knowledge of such is of the experimental kind.

Experimental religion, in the full sense of the phrase, might include all that discovery of the reality and excellency of the gospel, which the convert makes, both by his inward perception of its truths, and his external conformity to its precepts. But since a foundation exists for a distinction between the religion of the *heart*, and that of the *life*;

and since it has become customary, both for speakers and writers, to use the word *experience* with particular application to the former, it will be used in this restricted sense in this work. The reader will therefore understand, that by *experimental religion* is meant, those *views, affections, desires and feelings*, which exist in the *heart*—the heart of the renewed man. When distinguished from practice, it is that part of religion which is seen by none but the Searcher of hearts and the individual who is the subject of it. It is the *root* of the tree, which, out of sight, grows downward, and supports those branches that bear the precious fruit. It is that *inside cleansing* of the cup and platter, which makes the outside clean also. It is the *good treasure of the heart*, from which good things are continually brought forth. Experimental religion is that *well of living water* that springs up within us, and sends forth refreshing streams around us. It is the *salt in ourselves*, which prevents unsavory discourse and a corrupt life. It is the *oil in the vessel*, which, though hidden from the view of the beholder, causes the lamp to burn so as to give light to all that are in the house. Isa. xxxvii. 31. Matt. xxiii. 26, and xii. 35. John iv. 14, and vii. 38. Mark ix. 50. Matt. xxv. 4.

Some there are who manifest a disgust at the very mention of *experience* in application to religion. But I know not why they should be prejudiced against the *word*, seeing it is found in the scriptures. Eccl. i. 16. Rom. v. 4. And what term could be better adapted to distinguish that knowledge which is the result of experiment, from that which is obtained by mere study or information? Whether they are pleased with the *word* or not, there is certainly no ground for opposition to the *thing* we intend by it. Who can say it is unsuitable for us to *feel the weight* of that truth which relates to God and our salvation? If the truth itself is not foolish, there can be nothing foolish in our appreciating its importance, and receiving it in the love of it.

To make light of experimental religion, is not only to undervalue that which is holy, but that in which *all holiness* consists. Who is there so ignorant as not to know, that holiness does not consist in *intellectual discoveries* of truth—the mere speculations of the mind? If these were to constitute holiness, devils themselves could claim the character; for they believe in the existence of the true God, and of Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. Jam. ii. 19. Mark i. 24. Nor can holiness consist in mere *external actions*, any more than in a speculative faith. What moral excellence can there be in the motion of the hand, the foot, or the tongue, disconnected from the impulse given to these members by the heart? Though one should bestow all his goods to feed the poor, without the principle of charity in his heart, (and the charity described by Paul belongs to the experimental department,) it would profit him nothing, because it would leave him entirely destitute of holiness. The belief of the soundest doctrine has nothing in it of the nature of holiness, if experimental religion be excluded from such belief. And I may add, that the practice of all the external duties required by the law, would not constitute any holiness of character, if done without that purity of motive which belongs to the religion of the heart. Were we, then, to suffer ourselves to be either reasoned or laughed out of the experimental part of religion, we should have nothing



left but a dead carcass. Our religion would resemble a time-piece which wants nothing except the addition of the weight or main spring ; but this, it must be remembered, happens to be the very thing necessary to give motion to the whole machinery. So, while our religion is without grace in the heart, it is dead and motionless.

Some of those who treat this branch of religion with contempt, will perhaps justify themselves by saying, that every whim and vapor has been trusted in, as constituting a religious experience. This fact will not be denied : but is it a fair inference that *all* experimental religion is whimsical and vaporous ? It is an indisputable fact, that an idol has been called *God*, and has been worshiped ; but is it a legitimate inference, that *every thing* which is called *God* and worshiped, is as vain and worthless as an idol ? JEHOVAH, the God of Israel, is none the less worthy of regard, because heathen idols have also been called gods, and as such have been worshiped. The most absurd notions, in different periods of the church, have been strenuously advocated, as if they were the true doctrines of the gospel : but who would think it right to infer from this, that the real doctrines of the gospel are absurd and ridiculous ? I may add, without any deviation from the truth, that many rites and observances, which are not only useless but pernicious, have been considered as constituting the essence of practical religion : but how unreasonable it would be, to infer from this superstitious perversion of Christianity, that the practical religion enjoined and exemplified by Christ himself, is useless and pernicious. It would, however, be just as consistent, to discard all doctrinal and practical religion, on account of the false doctrines and practices which have been foisted into the church, as to despise all experimental religion, on account of those foolish vagaries which have passed under the name of religious experience.

By this time the reader may be anxious to make the interesting inquiry, “How shall I know what is *the true experimental religion of the gospel* ?” The question is all-important, and can undoubtedly be answered to the entire satisfaction of every honest inquirer. Experimental religion is not a thing which is made by the will of man, or of any collection of men ; but has its foundation in the very nature of things. It is not one thing in a Jew, and another in a Gentile ;—one thing under the Old Testament, and another under the New ;—one thing in Asia, and something entirely different in the other quarters of the earth. The experimental religion taught in the scriptures is not one thing among Presbyterians, and another thing among Episcopalians, and another among Baptists, and still another among those of a different denomination. Neither is it one thing in kings, and another in their subjects ;—one thing among men of learning and accomplishments, and another among the unlearned and rude. No, it is the same thing in every place, period, and person. It possesses a nature as immutable as that of God. It is not a vapor, nor an imagination, nor a mere pleasant feeling, either in the body, or in the mind. Experimental religion is something altogether superior to such fancies as these. It is *truth*, *divine truth*, truth enthroned in the heart, and governing its affections. The doctrines of revelation contain truth in *propositions* ; experience is the truth in *dispositions* and voluntary ex-

ercises. The first is written with ink on paper; the last, by the *Spirit of the living God, in the fleshly tables of the heart*. What but experimental religion did David mean when he said, "Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts?" What else did John intend by the *anointing* that abideth in us; which he declares is *truth*, and is no lie? And what else could Christ himself have intended by that *knowledge of the truth*, which he assured his hearers would make them free? Ps. li. 6. 1 John, ii. 27. John viii. 32. In these and many other passages, all that experimental religion approved by the scriptures, is described to us under the name of TRUTH, that weighty word which stands opposed to fiction and change.

If religious experience were a thing that received its shape by the will of man, *truth* would never have been selected as the word by which to describe it. The selection of this significant word for this purpose, was no doubt designed to show that mere *feeling* is not the thing; nor mere *religious feeling*; but that it needs to be *right feeling*, even that which accords with the true state of things in the moral system; particularly as they are exhibited in the word of God. If the existence and character of God are immutable, and also the doctrines which result from his existence and character; then gracious experiences must be equally immutable; for they consist in feelings or affections which correspond with these fundamental truths. The scripture makes it necessary, that the doctrine or instruction it contains should be *spiritually discerned*, and cordially approved. God has not revealed so much important truth merely to gratify our curiosity, or enlarge the intellect. This revelation is made to creatures who have a *heart*, as well as an understanding; we shall therefore, of necessity, either love or hate the truth that is made known to us. Hatred of the truth can not be the experience required; and the love of error is nothing different from the hatred of truth. What can be more absurd than to suppose a true evangelical experience to consist in believing and loving a false gospel; that true love to God can be delighted with false representations of his character; and that saving faith is as well pleased with a false Christ as with the true.

A true Christian experience can not consist in the heart's being united to error, or (to use other words) in loving falsehood. Let such love be ever so great, still it is worthless; yea, the more ardent, the more offensive it must be in the sight of Him who requireth truth, not in our mouths only, but also in our inward parts. Religious error, even when it is brought forward under the sacred name of Christian doctrine, is nevertheless represented in the word of God as a wild seed, producing no harvest except that whose end is to be burned. Error is spoken of, not as purifying, but as corrupting and poisoning the mind, and eating like a canker. 2 Tim. ii. 17.

I trust the reader was convinced in the outset of this work, (if, indeed, he needed conviction on so plain a point,) that truth is of necessity harmonious; and that the different parts of that religion which is from God can not be discordant. But what could constitute a more grating discord, than the supposition that Christian experience consists in loving a different gospel from that of Jesus Christ! The candid of every denomination in the Christian church, must accede to this senti-

ment ; That to constitute a harmony between doctrinal and experimental religion, the TRUE DOCTRINES, whatever they are, must be cordially received. Allowing that every Christian has his errors, this is certain, that his religious experiences, so far as they are genuine, do not consist at all in the love he has to his errors, but in the love he has to those *truths* which his creed embraces.

As we are now entering on this interesting department of divine truth, how important that we should be established in correct principles. If we are guilty of any essential mistake here, it will prove a worm at the root of our vine, and sand at the foundation of our building. Our religion will neither please God, nor save our own souls. Let it be increased ever so much, and persevered in ever so long, it will avail nothing. It is not enough that we *feel* ; or that our feelings concern religion ; or that they are joyful : the question is, Are they *holy* ? Do they agree with the word of truth ? Until there is an agreement between the affections of the heart, and the truth communicated in the scriptures, the truth is not in us, and in the most proper sense it is not known. Before this it is seen with a jaundiced eye. For it should be remembered that the *heart*, rather than the understanding, is the eye of the soul ; at least it is so when spiritual things are the object of vision. So long as the heart remains evil, the soul never discovers their true beauty, but is full of darkness. Matt. vi. 22, 23. Nor can this darkness be dispelled by mere intellectual light, however much it may be increased.

That a *conformity of the heart to divine truth*, is the thing which renders a religious experience genuine, is evident from the scripture representations concerning both true and false converts. *True* converts are characterized by the influence which the truth exerts upon them, and their feelings towards it. They “with open (unveiled) face beholding as in a glass (i. e. the gospel) the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” They have “purified their souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit.” They are “clean through the word that is spoken to them.” They are “sanctified through the truth.” They “know the grace of God in truth.” 2 Cor. iii. 18. 1 Pet. i. 22. John xv. 3 ; xvii. 17. Col. i. 6. The *gospel*, the *truth*, the *word*, and the *grace of God*, in these several passages, mean the same thing, viz. that revelation of God’s glorious grace which is made in the scriptures. Also, the *unveiling* of the face, and the *purifying, cleansing, or sanctifying* of the soul, are descriptive of one thing, namely, that radical change which is effected in all those who are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. As an immediate consequence of this change, the glory of the Lord is seen, the grace of God is truly known, and the truth is obeyed. This transformation of character, which lays the foundation of all the future experiences of the Christian, is attributed to the instrumentality of the word, the truth, or, what is the same, the glory of the Lord revealed ; and, as efficient agency is concerned, it is ascribed to the Spirit of the Lord. The Spirit, by means of the word, makes known to the sinner his moral blindness, and then, by his own almighty influence, removes the film from his eyes, and pours in the light of truth upon his soul. A world of spiritual wonders now



arrests his attention : for being created in Christ, old things are past away, and all things are become new. He receives with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save his soul. The seed of the word is sown in his heart, where it will take deep root, and bring forth fruit unto eternal life.

*False converts, or hypocrites, are represented as under the influence of religious affections which are of an entirely different character, having no agreement with the truth.* They are characterized as those who do not *understand the word* ; who do not *receive the love of the truth*, that they may be saved ; nor have *the word of God abiding in them* : but as men of corrupt minds, and *destitute of the truth*. Matt. xiii. 19, 23. 2 Thess. ii. 10. John v. 38. 1 Tim. vi. 5. If these are the characteristics which mark the hypocrite, it is a fair inference that those of a contrary nature distinguish the true Christian. He must understand the word, and receive the truth in the love of it : he must not be destitute of the truth, but have the word of God abiding in him ; the word of Christ must dwell in him richly.

As I have insisted on the necessity of an agreement between our religious affections and the word of God, some may understand me to intimate, that the soundness of a conversion is to be determined by its being accompanied by certain pertinent texts of scripture suddenly suggested to the mind. Far be it from me to express any such sentiment ; for should all the promises of the Bible rush into the mind of the anxious sinner at once, it would, in my view, be no proof that he was born of the Spirit. And if this should affect him to tears, or produce the greatest exultation of joy, still it would not determine the soundness of his conversion. If the beauties of holiness, which are contained in the promises are not seen ; if these do not have a transforming effect on the heart, his joys, however ecstatic, are vain and worthless. There is a divine excellency in the truth of God's word, (even its threatenings as well as its promises ; ) and in every genuine conversion that *excellency is discovered* ; it is seen to be glorious on account of its own intrinsic beauty. The truth, like the seal on the wax, leaves its image on the heart. It diffuses through the affections of the soul its own divine and purifying nature. And if such be the effect of God's word on the heart of the convert, it is by no means a material circumstance, that he should be able to tell what particular passages, or whether any, were suggested to his mind at the time when he was turned from the power of Satan unto God.

Experimental religion begins with the renovation of the heart. What passes in the mind of converts as preparatory to this change, may be spoken of with propriety, for the sake of illustrating the riches of divine grace ; but since all this takes place before they become possessed of the Christian character, and is nothing of a higher nature than that which may now be found in the unregenerate, it is not, in the most proper sense, any part of their Christian experiences. These commence with their becoming partakers of the divine nature, and last as long as they live ; yea, as long as they exist.

Some have been in the habit of considering the experiences of a Christian, to be limited to a very short period ; not extending many months, perhaps not many days or hours, beyond his first hopes of for-

givenness : but this is an entirely wrong view of the subject. The inward religion, which commences with the new birth, lasts forever. There is not only a new course of external conduct begun, which lasts to the end of life, but also a new set of inward exercises which are equally lasting. The Christian *life* is continued, because the *principle* of life remains : “For his seed remaineth in him.” The tree grows *upward* in its branches, because it grows *downward* in its roots. The refreshing waters of grace continue to *flow out* in fertilizing streams, because the well within continues to *spring up*. We continue to *serve* God, because we continue to *love* him. We persevere in *bringing forth fruits meet for repentance*, because we persevere in the *exercise of that repentance which is unto life*. The Christian to the end of life *walks by faith*, because to the end of life he continues to *exercise faith*, even that which purifieth the heart. The continuance of the *religion of the heart*, is the only thing which insures the continuance of *holy practice*. The whole of holy practice, from beginning to end, first exists in the heart ; and while considered as existing there, it is denominated experimental religion. This is that part of divine truth now to be delineated.

Under the First Part, doctrinal truth was separated into distinct Articles. The same method will now be pursued in treating of the religion of the heart.

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## ARTICLE I.

**BENEVOLENCE, OR THE LOVE OF GOOD WILL, IS NOT ONLY A PART OF EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION, BUT IS, INDEED, THE SOURCE OF ALL THE GRACES OF THE SPIRIT.**

BENEVOLENCE implies a good wish toward the object it regards. The word is of Latin derivation, and is compounded of the adverb *bene*, which signifies *well*, and the verb *volo*, to wish. It is synonymous with *good will* ; which, however strong may be its kind wishes toward the object of its regard, does not necessarily imply any delight in its character. It may be exercised toward friends and foes ; toward good and bad characters. The birth of the Savior was announced by the angels, as an expression of God's good will to men, sinful men ; who though they had much to excite his compassion, had nothing to attract his complacency.

In the scriptures, *love* is the word most frequently used to express both good will to the person, and also delight in the character. In the order of nature, good will has a priority to complacency, and, indeed, to all those holy affections which constitute the system of Christian experience. When I speak of its priority, I would not be understood to mean that it is more excellent in its nature, (for their nature is the

same,) but it more than any of the rest resembles the root of the tree. By the relationship which the other religious affections bear to this, we obtain the clearest conception of their character. The apostle teaches us that every right affection, required in the moral law, is comprehended in the love of good will, when he says "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor." To the same effect is that teaching of Christ, which leads us to consider love to God and men, as comprising all that is enjoined by the law and the prophets. That the religion of the gospel, as well as of the law, is comprehended in benevolence, is made plain by the instruction contained in the thirteenth chapter of the first of Corinthians. All evangelical religion is in this chapter resolved into *love*; which the translators have here expressed by what they considered to be a word of the the same import, namely, *charity*. The chapter closes by saying, "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." Love appears to be that grace of the Spirit which beautifies and strengthens all the rest. *Faith* worketh by love; and that *hope* that maketh not ashamed is the result of the love of God shed abroad in the heart. *Humility*, that grace which gives such a lustre to the whole Christian character, is a branch growing from this root: for "charity vaunteth not itself and is not puffed up." Gal. v. 6. Rom. v. 5. 1 Cor. xiii. 4.

Benevolence comprises not only all the holiness of the *creature*, but also all that of the *Creator*; for when it is said "God is love," his whole moral perfection is declared in a word. That the love which in this passage is attributed to God, intends his benevolence, is evident, because the apostle proceeds immediately to tell us how he manifested his love, namely, by sending his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 1 John, iv. 8, 9. Pure benevolence was the fountain, whence proceeded this mighty stream that has gladdened our wretched world. God so loved the world that he did not withhold his dearly beloved Son, but freely gave him up for our redemption. In this benevolent affection, especially in this wonderful display of it, he glories, as being the highest proof of his moral excellence. The goodness of God is his glory; and his goodness is most strikingly manifested in his benevolence; and this never appeared to such advantage, as when he gave his Son to die to redeem rebels from deserved punishment.

That we may rightly understand all which shall be said on experimental religion, it is very important that we form clear and distinct conceptions of that *love*, which is the subject of its *first* Article. A mistake here will spread darkness over this whole department of our system. It will be making the tree corrupt, and of course its fruit will be corrupt. If the love experienced be pure, the tree can not be corrupt; so on the other hand, if the love be impure, the tree can not be good. Love is so much the root of the tree of grace, that if the love we exercise be essentially defective, the tree can yield no wholesome fruit. Surely a matter of such consequence claims to be investigated with much diligence and prayer. We are assured that *he that loveth is born of God*: but if we form an entirely wrong opinion of the *nature* of that love which is the evidence of the new birth, the tendency of such an opinion will be ruinous.



What, it may now be asked, is the distinctive nature of that love, that benevolent affection, which is the substance of the experimental part of the Christian religion? A question more important than this can hardly be proposed. And although an answer to it was in a measure anticipated under the first division of the work, still, as it is naturally brought up again in this place, and as it is to the highest degree consequential, I feel myself bound to give a definite answer to the question.

Benevolence, according to the definition which has already been given, wishes well to the object of its regard; it wishes *well*, in distinction either from malice or indifference. The all-sufficient Being, who is from eternity, was always disinterested in the love he exercised toward himself; but his benevolence did not suffer him to rest without diffusing good abroad. This led him to originate beings susceptible of happiness. His benevolence was as really manifested in giving them their existence and capacities, as in promoting their happiness after their existence had taken place. For the object of *our* benevolent regard, we find a universe already in existence. That part of it which is devoid of sensation, and of course incapable of enjoyment, makes no claim to our benevolence; but every sentient being is a suitable object for its exercise. Even irrational creatures, that have the corporeal senses, are susceptible of animal enjoyments, which constitute them, in a low degree, objects of good will. When it is said, "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast," it must imply that he regards it in a benevolent manner; for even an unrighteous man regards the life of his beast when considered as an article of property. Those things which are destitute of sensation, can be valued only for their use to such beings as have it: but all those which are susceptible of happiness are, in themselves considered, proper objects of benevolent regard. It is the nature of benevolence, to desire for the object of its regard the *greatest degree* of good of which it is susceptible. And since the existence of the brutal race does not extend beyond the present life, nor their enjoyments rise above animal gratifications, our kindest feelings towards them must be regulated by their limited susceptibilities.

That which forms the principal object of benevolent regard, is the system of intelligent beings. In this system, we and our fellow men are comprehended. They who possess good will to men, will desire their bodily health and their enjoyment of earthly comforts; but much more, that they may participate in those superior enjoyments, which are peculiar to intellectual beings. Since a holy character constitutes the moral beauty of such beings, and prepares them both for doing and receiving good, a benevolent regard to them will above all things desire that they may become holy, if they are not so already; or, if this be their present character, that it may be continued forever. God is the great pattern of benevolence; and his love to our fallen world was eminently a love to our souls. He saw that sin had rendered us odious, noxious, and wretched. His love was gloriously displayed in providing means for an entire transformation of our vitiated character. Christ, in giving himself to redeem us from all *iniquity*, manifested the highest possible regard to our well being. Our iniquities had separated between

us and our God ; and unless we could be redeemed from them, the separation must remain forever. To accomplish this infinitely desirable deliverance, the Redeemer undertook his work, and died for our redemption. The concern which the apostles manifested for their fellow men, resembled that of their divine Master. It had reference more especially to their immortal interests, their salvation from sin and the wrath to come. To obtain this great and desirable object, they prayed, they preached, they suffered ; not counting their lives dear unto themselves.

This benevolent concern for souls, which actuated the Savior in all he did and suffered, and which shone conspicuously in his apostles, exists in some degree in all those who have passed from death unto life. Every man who is himself converted, desires the conversion and salvation of the whole race, including foes as well as friends. Paul said to Agrippa, "I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were not only almost, but altogether such as I am, except these bonds." Had the whole world been his audience, he would not have excepted a single hearer ; his good wishes would have embraced them all. The benevolent mind, while it desires the conversion and eternal blessedness of every man as a good in itself, is nevertheless reconciled to the will of God in appointing it to be otherwise ; for it rests satisfied that even this appointment is the effect of benevolence, and that it will eventuate in more good than would have resulted from a different arrangement. But it takes no delight in the misery itself, even when it is endured by an enemy. Happiness, in distinction from misery, is uniformly the object that is sought by beings of a benevolent character. As the surgeon never gives pain to the patient, only for the sake of preserving his life or promoting his health ; so it is with the efforts of benevolence ; no pain is given except with an ultimate view to the promotion of happiness, either of the sufferers themselves, or the moral system at large.

There are two, and only two classes of moral agents, the *holy* and *unholy* ; those who are benevolent and those who are not. Both classes, however, agree in exercising love, and in seeking happiness ; yea, they agree in seeking it as the ultimate end of all their actions. That which makes the essential difference of character in these two classes of agents, is this ; the one seeks a *general*, and the other a *private* happiness. Benevolent beings seek the former, but such as are devoid of benevolence, the latter. It is the nature of that holy love, which we term benevolence, to wish well to *the whole intelligent system*. No limits can be set to the object of its good wishes. It embraces the whole universe. The child, who may not know that there are a million of beings in existence, if possessed of a benevolent heart, is prepared to love all that exist, let them be ever so many ; and to desire that the greatest possible sum of felicity may be enjoyed. But the adult, who knows there is an innumerable multitude of beings in the universe, if he be destitute of benevolence, loves himself supremely, and seeks no higher object than the promotion of his own individual happiness. In this consists the difference between the ultimate ends which are sought by holy and unholy beings : the one class seek a general, and the other a private good ; the one are *disinterested* and the other *selfish*.

Before I proceed to the proof of this point, that *disinterested* and *selfish* love constitute the difference between holy and unholy beings, I shall spend a few moments in defining these terms. Some have confounded the word *disinterested* with *uninterested*, and so have made it signify the same as apathy. Others have supposed that it implies the annihilation of one's own interest, rather than the reduction of it to its comparative place in the system. Let it be remembered that the word *interested* has two distinct significations. We say a man is interested, when he is governed by a selfish motive. We also say a man is interested when he does not view the thing in question with indifference, but is much affected with it; and this we say, without intending to determine the nature of his affections, whether selfish or benevolent. Now it is evident, that the word *interested* takes two different compounds, which mark the opposition to both its significations. That which serves as a contrast to the first signification, is *disinterested*; which is the reverse of *selfish*. The word used as a contrast to the other signification, is *uninterested*; which is the same as apathetic, and implies the absence of feeling and concern about the matter. Benevolence is far from being *uninterested* in the object of its supreme regard; but at the same time it is *disinterested* in seeking this object, because the value it places upon it is disconnected from every selfish consideration. Disinterested benevolence, however, does not suppose any real indifference to our own interest and well being; but it does suppose the existence of a superior regard to that general interest which is more important. When the word *disinterested* is rightly understood, it is proper to apply it to that love which holy beings exercise towards themselves, as to that which they exercise towards others. They are impartial, as far as they are holy, in the love they exercise towards themselves, not thinking of themselves more highly than they ought to think.

The word *selfishness* hardly needs any explanation. When we see any one making every thing bend to suit his own interest, without regarding the good of others, we pronounce him a selfish man. At the same time we all know that the law of God allows, and even requires, a man to love himself as well as to love his neighbor. And certainly that love which God requires a man to exercise towards himself, ought not to be denominated *selfish*. As a man's own family is placed more immediately under his care than the family of his neighbor, so is his own soul more than the soul of any other individual. In discharging the duties arising from these trustments, he is required to provide very specially for his *own household*, and to take heed to *himself*, looking diligently lest he should fail of the grace of God. But if any being below the Great Supreme make himself the chief end of his actions, this is selfishness. In this case he values his own happiness infinitely above its comparative worth. He prefers it above the interests of the whole universe, merely because it is his own.

I shall now adduce proof to establish the point, *That benevolence and selfishness form the precise difference between holy and unholy beings*. Though our Article relates only to *benevolence*, yet, as this can be better understood by contrasting it with selfishness, its moral opposite, it will be my object to show that this is that distinction between characters, which is sanctioned both by reason and revelation.



1. It is sanctioned by *reason*. It being conceded, that a *real fundamental difference* exists between holy and unholy beings, we are greatly concerned to know in what this difference consists. That the two characters are made by their different objects of regard, and that these objects must be as dissimilar as public and private good, is a conclusion to which reason would conduct us by such arguments as these :

1. It is reasonable to believe this to be the difference between holy and unholy characters, because the difference is not only real, but as *great as possible*. No two things can be wider apart than disinterested benevolence and selfishness. The object regarded by the one, is the universe—God and his intelligent creation ; while the object regarded by the other is one's own self. One of these objects is the greatest it could be, and the other the least. Benevolence desires, that God may have all possible glory, and his creation as much holiness and blessedness as he can communicate. But it is the nature of self-love to be regardless of the glory of God and the perfection of the moral system ; and to be wholly absorbed in its own little concerns. No creature can be influenced by a less motive than that which governs a selfish mind. I presume none will object to this distinction between holy and sinful beings, by saying it is merely circumstantial. The difference is perfect, it can not be more so.

2. It is reasonable to believe this to be the true distinction between holy and unholy beings, because it can not be real, and yet be *less*. He that is not *disinterested* in his love is *interested*. He that is not *benevolent* is *selfish*. He who has not a heart to love a *universe* of beings, has a heart to love none but *himself*. It is not rash judging to say, the man whose heart does not incline him to the exercise of universal good will, does not regard, for its own sake, the happiness of any besides himself. Certain it is, that every man loves his own happiness, however foolish may be the methods he takes for its promotion. He may have a regard to others on account of a connection of interests, formed by some particular relation wherein they stand to him, by means of consanguinity, intermarriages, secular business, local situation, and other similar circumstances ; and yet this be nothing different from an ultimate regard to his own honor, interest, and happiness. If we have a regard to the welfare of any of our fellow beings, which is not originated by self-love, what should prevent us from exercising universal good will ? And if we fall short of good will to the universe, where can we be expected to stop, short of confining our regard to ourselves ? I am convinced that a mere rational view of this subject will lead to the adoption of this sentiment ; That there is no medium between a universal good will, and complete selfishness ; that he who does not make a common interest with God and his friends, must be guilty of living only to himself.

3. We have reason to conclude that this forms the distinction of character between holy and unholy beings, because we can have no conception of its being a real difference, and yet consisting in *anything else*. It is evident, no essential difference can exist between such as have one ultimate end, and are influenced by the same class of motives. For example, there can be no fundamental difference between those

who agree in being entirely governed by motives that are selfish. If one man gives his earnings to the poor, while another hoards them; if one man prays, while another restrains prayer; and repents, while the other is committing flagrant crimes, there is no fundamental difference of character, in case selfish motives lie at the bottom of all these different actions. Unless the better conduct proceed from better motives, even motives which are not selfish, there is no such difference as to render it proper to denominate the one holy, and the other sinful.

4. Another reason we have for believing, that benevolence and selfishness form the proper distinction between beings that are holy and sinful, is this; that *all conceivable traits of holy and sinful character can be accounted for by the existence of these two principles alone*. There is no holy affection or action, to which disinterested benevolence will not give birth. Nor is there any affection or conduct so vile, but that a selfish spirit is bad enough to generate it. Nor is it possible to conceive of a single sin, which can not be traced up to the selfish principle as its source. The love of money is said to be the root of all evil, because it is the root of very much evil; but surely covetousness does not prompt men to such sins as drunkenness and impurity. Pride also is the root of very much evil; but the sins just named, together with others which might be named, are not produced by pride; and yet are manifestly the fruit of selfishness. Such a thing as unselfish sin is irrational, it has no place in the moral system. Sin can not be committed without motives; and it is certain it can not proceed from those of a benevolent character; for reason, as well as scripture, declares, that love worketh no ill to his neighbor. If then we can not be stimulated by a benevolent motive to injure another, it will follow, unless we can do it in the absence of all motives, that such as are of a selfish character are the only ones by which we can possibly be governed. Whoever will think intently on this subject must, I am persuaded, become convinced that there is nothing wrong, either in the heart or life, which requires any other cause for its production than selfishness.

5. It is reasonable to believe that universal good will and selfishness form the true distinction between good and bad characters, because *such good will is an affection which harmonizes with the moral system, while selfish affection is entirely unharmonious and discordant*. Universal good will is an affection which sweetly accords with the fact, that we have a Creator and a multitude of fellow creatures, who, together with ourselves, constitute one grand moral system. And surely no affection can be approved, which does not tend to unite us to the system of which we make a part. Now since it is the tendency of disinterested love, in its various modifications, to produce this union, must not such love be the very essence of a holy character? And since it is the tendency of selfishness, to sunder this union, and throw the moral system into a state of contention and war, must not such an affection be in the fullest sense *the root of all evil*?

6. To sustain the distinction we have made between the holy and sinful character, reason furnishes us with an argument of some weight, derived from *the analogy existing between the different works of God*. There is undoubtedly a harmony between the natural and moral worlds,

since both have one divine Author.\* In the natural world we find the various parts of the material system are kept together, and their motions rendered regular, by means of the great law of *attraction*. In this system all attract and are attracted, whether they be near together, or far apart. The greater the body and the nearer its position, the greater attractive power it exerts. Were one of these bodies to exist alone, it would even then have the same attractive power. But by being surrounded with other bodies of the same nature, there is an opportunity for this to be very beautifully exhibited. Let this natural law be violated, so that every part shall have a repulsive, instead of an attractive power, the consequence would be, that the harmony of the spheres would be disturbed, and the present order of the material system would be immediately exchanged for disorder and confusion.

The attraction which binds together the material system, is a beautiful illustration of that benevolence which embraces in its arms the intellectual universe. Were such an affection to govern the minds of all intelligent beings, it would secure universal order, peace, and happiness. Selfishness answers to repulsion; and its direct tendency is to destroy the harmony and happiness of the moral system. Reason now demands, Has the Creator given the law of attraction to the material system, as the means of preserving its harmony, and must he not have made a *moral law* for the moral system, the tendency of which would be to preserve a holy harmony among all intelligent beings?

II. This distinction between holy and unholy characters, is supported by *revelation*. It is to be hoped that we shall take heed to this, as to a light shining in a dark place. Who can but be anxious to know what the word of God has said on an article, so fundamental to the religion of the heart? I remark,

1st. That the distinction of character made by benevolence and selfishness, is manifestly recognized in the holy scriptures. I do not say that the words themselves frequently occur. *Benevolence* occurs but once, and *selfishness* not at all. But the ideas these terms are adapted to convey, are of frequent occurrence. Nor is there any valid objection against using terms in theological discourses, which occur but seldom, or which are not found at all in the Bible. As to forming our sentiments on religious subjects, we are to be strictly held to the law and to the testimony; but these sentiments we have a right to express in that language which will now be best understood. It may become quite necessary to select other words and phrases, besides those which we find in the scriptures themselves, for the purpose of making known more explicitly what are the opinions we adopt, concerning the doctrines they contain. The necessity arises from this circumstance; that all sects, however different their creeds, profess to give their assent to every article of faith which is taught in the scriptures. If therefore you ask the Unitarian, if he does not believe that the Word is *God*; he will tell you, Yes, but I do not believe that Christ is God supreme. Hence it becomes necessary to distinguish the sentiments of Trinitarians on this subject, by saying that they believe in

\* I have heard of a certain noted teacher of theology, who used repeatedly to say to his students, "Young men, I would have you to know, that the same God made the heavens and the earth, who made the Bible."



the *proper divinity* of the Savior, although this phrase is not found in the scriptures. The terms *total* and *entire* are never used by our translators in application to human depravity; and yet they answer an important purpose, to mark the sentiments of such as believe that men in their unrenewed state are wholly under the dominion of sin.

I repeat the remark, that the word of God recognizes the distinction of character which is made by benevolence and selfishness. It speaks of some men as *living unto themselves*; and of others, as *not living unto themselves*. The former exhibit a selfish, and the latter a disinterested character. Some are said to lay up treasure for themselves, in distinction from being rich toward God. This implies as great a difference, as between seeking the least, or the greatest good. The same moral difference is discovered in this injunction: "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth." Seeking his own, to the exclusion of another's wealth, is entire selfishness; while the seeking of another's wealth, as an object dear to his heart, like his own, is benevolence, disinterested and universal. When it is said that charity "seeketh not her own," it supposes the existence of a love which does not make its own interest its ultimate end. What I wish to establish under this particular head, is merely this; that the distinction, which we are in the habit of making between good and bad characters, by the terms *benevolence* and *selfishness*, is not a human invention, but is manifestly sanctioned by the word of God. If this matter is established, I shall proceed to show,

2dly. That the word of God not only recognizes such a difference of character, but evidently employs these two opposite characteristics, to describe *moral good* and *evil*. When Paul said concerning Timothy, "I have no man like minded, who will naturally care for your state; for all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's;" two interests are supposed to exist, the one benevolent, and the other selfish; and to seek the former is represented as indicative of moral excellence, while to seek the latter, namely, a selfish interest, is stigmatized as being unworthy of men, especially men engaged in the ministry of reconciliation. Phil. ii. 20, 21. In Paul's second epistle to Timothy, he informs him that in the last days perilous times should come; for, said he, "men shall be *lovers of their own selves*, covetous, boasters, proud, &c. Here we find selfishness placed at the head of a frightful catalogue of unholy tempers and practices; which implies, not only, that it has a vile nature in common with the rest, but that it may be considered as a *fountain* of iniquity. What an entire contrast to this vile affection does the apostle himself manifest, when he says to the Corinthians, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." 2 Cor. 12, 15. He was willing to spend his money and his strength for their benefit. And this he was cheerful in doing, even in case his efforts for their good, instead of raising, should lower him in their esteem. But why do I bring into view the examples of Timothy and Paul, to prove that the scriptures speak honorably of that love which is expansive and disinterested? Their benevolence was of the right kind, but it was meagre when compared with that of their Lord and Master. "For ye know," said Paul, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he

was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

3dly. This distinction of character is exhibited in the moral law, which requires disinterested love, and forbids selfishness. In requiring me to love God, my neighbor, and myself, it presents before me the whole intelligent system as the object of my regard. That this law does not allow an individual to make himself the ultimate end of his actions, is evident ; for, *first*, it requires him to love God supremely,—*secondly*, it requires him to love his neighbor as himself,—and *thirdly*, it threatens his disobedience with death, the destruction of all his happiness forever. Such a threatening, in connection with such requirements, serves to show, that since God does not make as much of the happiness of an individual, as of the general good, it must be wrong for us, the subjects of his government, to do it. Supreme love to one's self is perfect hostility to the law ; and nothing short of universal good will harmonizes with its precepts and penalties.

4thly. The *unregenerate* and the *regenerate* are distinguished by their selfishness and their benevolence ; which shows these to be the characteristics constituting the difference between sinful and holy beings. That this is the real difference between the unconverted and the converted, is clearly taught by the apostle in this passage : " And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them and rose again. 2 Cor. v. 15. The whole of a wicked unregenerate life is here comprised in one thing, viz. selfishness ; for this is clearly the import of the charge brought against them of *living unto themselves*. And wherein do they differ from this, when they have passed from death unto life ? They live not unto themselves, but unto him that died for them. This is as much as to tell us, that the new birth changes selfish into benevolent men ; for living to him who died for us, as contrasted with living unto ourselves, implies not only a disposition to glorify Christ, but also to act in concert with him in doing all the good of which we are capable. When the same apostle, in another of his epistles, says, " For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself ; for whether we live, we live unto the Lord ; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord"—he is describing the subjects of grace, as rising above that sordid selfishness which characterized them when they were the servants of sin. While such as remain servants of sin live unto themselves, and die unto themselves, the subjects of regenerating grace widely differ from them ; since their ultimate end in wishing to live or to die, is not selfish, but disinterested. See Rom. xiv. 7, 8, and Phil. i. 20—25.

5thly. Another argument derived from the scriptures, in confirmation of the distinction we have made between holy and sinful characters, is this : They who by *profession* have a holy character, are represented as evincing their *hypocrisy*, as soon as they make it appear that their religion is founded on selfishness. Thus it is said, " Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself." Again it is said, " Did ye fast at all unto me, even unto me ? And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did ye not eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves ?" Hos. x. 1. Zech. vii. 5, 6. These passages clearly teach us, that however pious any may appear, it is all hypocrisy, if

selfishness, instead of God's glory, be their ultimate end. The scripture never considers men to be possessed of a holy character, because they pray and fast and give alms, if self-love be the actuating principle. Nor does it represent them as holy, because they repent and believe, unless their repentance and faith work by *love*. Nor does it represent their love as possessed of any moral worth, let it be ever so ardent, in case it terminate on themselves. "If ye love them that love you, (said the divine teacher,) what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?"

6thly. That disinterested love and selfishness form the grand discriminations of character among intelligent beings, is made clear by the controversy between the Lord and Satan in relation to the religion of Job. The Lord asserted Job's superior moral excellence, declaring him to be a perfect and upright man, one who feared God and eschewed evil. Satan did not pretend to dispute Job's being a religious man, even more religious than any of his cotemporaries: but he insinuated that all his religion (and he designed no doubt to include the religion of all God's other servants,) was of a selfish character; and that nothing would be necessary to prove it to be so, only for the Lord to take away those blessings of his providence that he had so profusely heaped upon him. With a view to establish this cardinal point, namely, that the religion of his faithful servants is not based on love to themselves, but is of a disinterested character, the Lord suffered Satan to strip Job of his great possessions and of his children; to fill his body with a painful and loathsome disease, and in other ways to afflict him, as far as was consistent with sparing his life. Now the very circumstance, that the Lord consented to have his servant thus severely tried, for the purpose of deciding the point in dispute, is sufficient proof that in His estimation there is such a thing as a religion which is not built upon self-love; and that such is the only religion which will meet his approbation. See Job i. and ii.

My quotations in support of the sentiments contained in the different Articles which I have placed before my readers, have hitherto nearly all of them been taken from the word of God; which indeed is the only book I can acknowledge as an infallible standard. Yet I would not undervalue the labors of those men who have not only diligently studied the inspired word, but who have also accompanied their studies with much prayer for divine illumination. And now, after having shown what, in my opinion, *the scriptures* have taught us on this leading article of experimental religion, I propose to throw before the reader the sentiments of a few of those theological writers, who, being dead, yet speak, and whose praise is in all the churches; that he may see that the views which I have exhibited on this subject are entertained by men of different countries, and belonging to different denominations of Christians.

President Edwards says, "True virtue" (by which he intends *true holiness*,) "most essentially consists in benevolence to being in general." And that which he made the opposite of benevolence to being in general, he denominated self-love. Dr. Scott says, "The more disinterested our labors are, the more apostolical they must be allowed to be." Abp. Leighton clearly represents self-love to be the basis of all



moral evil. Here are his words: "It is self-love that contracts the heart, and shuts out all other love, both of God and man, save only so far as our own interest carries, and that is still self-love." Mr. Henry, in his striking manner, exhibits the same view of self-love, when he says, "Self is the unity in which the world's trinity centres." That Mr. Fuller's views of the criminality of a selfish spirit, were in accordance with those of Edwards, Leighton and Henry, is very manifest: "Hereby," says he, "know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. Every false system originates and terminates in self. This is the character of the spirit of error.—If self-love be the spring of our religion, it is declared by our Savior to be of no value, and that it will issue in no divine reward." Dr. Bellamy gives us his views of both sides of the contrast. He says, "The gracious nature is a disposition to love God supremely, live to him ultimately, and delight in him superlatively; and this sinful nature is a disposition to love self supremely, live to self ultimately, and delight in that which is not God wholly." That disinterested benevolence or universal good will is the sum of holiness, while selfishness is the fountain of all iniquity, is clearly exhibited in the Theology of Dr. Dwight. He says, "Selfishness consists in a preference of ourselves to others, and to all others; to the universe and to God. This is sin; and all that in the scriptures is meant by sin. In every individual sin, this will invariably be found to be the essential and guilty character. Thus sensuality is the desire of self-gratification at the expense of any and all other happiness. Thus ambition is the desire of aggrandizing, and avarice the desire of enriching ourselves, in preference to the interests of all others. From this spirit arises all our opposition to God, and all our injustice to his creatures. He who has seriously and entirely preferred God to himself, or the good of the universe to his own private, separate good, has, in the complete sense, become virtuous." Dr. Hopkins says, "Holiness consists in disinterested benevolence, which is, in the nature of it, and in all its exercises, wholly contrary and opposed to self-love." Again, in speaking of the renovated character, he says, "It consists in **UNIVERSAL BENEVOLENCE**; or benevolence to being in general capable of happiness, and all that affection or exercise of heart which is necessarily included in this. Universal benevolence, or goodness, is necessarily pleased with good and happiness, wherever it takes place; for it seeks the general good, and that to the greatest possible degree; it must therefore be gratified wherever happiness takes place, and that in proportion to the degree of it."

Some object to the scheme of disinterested love, that it does not harmonize with that system of moral government adopted by the Supreme Ruler, in which he seeks to influence his subjects to obedience by *promises* and *threatenings*. This objection will be obviated by considering;

First, That God's approbation of holiness and opposition to sin are not selfish exercises; for he loves the one for its moral excellence, and the other he hates because its very nature is hateful. And he would have his creatures feel towards these moral qualities, which are of such opposite natures, just as he does himself. For this purpose he manifests his feelings by the sanctions of his law; promising favor to the

obedient, and threatening punishment to such as shall disobey. This manifestation of the feelings of the Lawgiver, in the sanctions annexed to his law, is adapted to exert a powerful influence on the minds of his loyal subjects. In this way he loudly admonishes them to imitate him in the holiness of his character. But as soon as any one becomes averse to the pursuits of holiness, and inclined to the ways of sin, so as to be deterred from external transgression by nothing but the dread of punishment, he is already, in the sight of God, a fallen creature.

Secondly. The prospect of the good promised, or of the evil threatened, may exert an influence on the subjects of moral government, without supposing them to be actuated by selfish motives, or to place private above public good. God values the good of each individual among his creatures; therefore, while he does not allow him to make his own happiness his chief end, he requires him to take care of it, and do himself no harm. As a Lawgiver, he marks out to him the path of duty, kindly assuring him, that it is also the path of safety; at the same time admonishing him that the way of transgressors is hard. If a traveler start back, because he sees a precipice before him, it would not follow as a necessary consequence, that he does it under the influence of a selfish motive; for a disinterested motive will influence a man to preserve his life.

Thirdly. Though the sanctions of the law do actually take hold of the selfish feelings of depraved creatures, still it furnishes no proof that the structure of the law is such as to foster a spirit of supreme love to ourselves. It is doubtless true, that, while men have no love of holiness, nor hatred of sin, they may be so allured by the promises, and alarmed by the threatenings of God's word, as to be induced to do many things, for the sake of securing their own happiness and avoiding that strange punishment to which they are exposed. God makes a merciful use of their selfish hopes and fears, to bring them under those instructions necessary to their salvation; and yet he requires them all this time to be governed by motives of a different character. Until the idol self is dethroned, there is no genuine obedience either to the law or to the gospel, because they are not influenced by the promises and threatenings, in such a manner as God requires.

According to the representation made in the parable of the prodigal son, it was his starving condition which led him to consider his ways and think of his father's house. But had he returned with as selfish feelings as those which prompted him to leave the paternal roof, he would not have met such a hearty welcome from his abused father. That which prepared him for his father's embrace, was the change that he had undergone in his mind: and this could have been nothing less than a change from a selfish to a disinterested character.

To the scheme of disinterested religion it is objected, that Moses, in what he did for Israel, had respect to the recompense of reward; and that even Christ was influenced, by the joy set before him, to endure the cross. To this objection I reply, *first*, That both Moses and Christ might value the reward promised to their labors and sufferings, and yet not make this reward their supreme object. I reply, *secondly*, That the reward which God has promised to them who love him, is adapted to please none except benevolent minds. The heaven that is sought from

selfish motives, is in reality a heaven which would not please beings of a benevolent character; for holy enjoyment constitutes no part of its bliss. But the heaven which was sought by Moses, who spent so much time in communion with God; and by David, who said, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness;" and by Paul, who desired to depart and be with Christ; and by Christ himself, who said, "My meat is to do the will of him who sent me:" and indeed by the whole company of his redeemed people; is a heaven of perfect holiness, where selfishness will have no place. As to the Redeemer himself, the joy that was set before him, by which he was enabled to endure the cross, despising the shame, was not so much the prospect of his own glorification in heaven, as of the happy result of his death in the salvation of the elect world, to the praise of the glory of divine grace. To be sustained, in prospect of such a reward, furnished decisive proof that his heart was not contracted with selfishness, but enlarged by the most expansive benevolence.

The reader can not but perceive that the benevolence which has been described in this Article is something of an entirely different nature from the thing of the same name which abounds in the unregenerate world. *Their* benevolence overlooks the glory of God and the interests of his great and everlasting kingdom. It confines its regards to *men*; and even in regarding them, it overlooks their most valuable interests. It exerts no purifying influence upon the heart or life, but can flourish in company with pride, debauchery, and gross impiety. But the benevolence which characterizes the Christian, is one of the fruits of the Spirit, being shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. Gal. v. 27. Rom. v. 5. He is deeply convinced, that by nature he had no such principle within him; that he did not love, until he was born of God. He is also convinced, that as he was indebted to the Holy Ghost for first imparting this pure affection, he is still dependent on his gracious aid for its preservation and increase.

I would fain hope, that every mind is convinced there are two, and but two kinds of love which actuate moral agents, considered as such; the one being comprehensive of all holy, and the other of all sinful affection; and that the objects of their supreme regard are as different as the whole universe of beings, and that individual called *self*. None are represented in the scriptures as sincerely regarding a portion of the universe, who are destitute of that benevolence which disposes them to embrace the whole. There are but two moral interests. We are *for* Christ, or we are *against* him; we are for the interests of the universe of God, or we are against them. The *patriot*, if he does not love the whole world, loves his own country only in relation to himself.

It is certain that the scriptures do not represent self-love to be the ground work of the Christian character; but, on the contrary, as the fruitful source of all manner of iniquity. That love which is "the root of the matter," and the foundation of all such religious experiences as God will approve, is a love which seeketh not her own interest exclusively, nor as her chief end.



## THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

In the Introduction it was intimated, that religion could not be true, and yet be discordant; that therefore a harmony must exist between its doctrines and experiences. As we have gone through with a connected series of doctrines, comprising those which are most fundamental to the gospel system; and have entered on the experimental department, by taking a view of *benevolent love*, that grace of the Spirit which is the source of all the rest, it will be important that we now turn back and place it by the side of each of the doctrinal Articles, for the purpose of determining whether it be in reality harmonious with them. If *this* shall be found to harmonize with the doctrines, it will not be necessary to spend as much time in pointing out that harmony in relation to the others; since that disinterested love which is the subject of this, forms the basis of all the subsequent Articles of the experimental system.

Between this *first* Article of the experimental system and the *first* of the doctrinal, the harmony is very manifest. That glorious Being whom that doctrine teaches us to believe in, this Article of experience teaches us supremely to love; or rather that he is thus loved by every one who is born of the Spirit. God himself is the great pattern as well as object of love. He loves the intelligent system, i. e. himself and his creatures, with infinite strength. His children have not infinite strength to exert; but they love the same great object; and will never be satisfied with themselves, until they love with all the strength they possess. When our benevolence is exercised towards a being who has the infinite fullness there is in Jehovah, it can not be employed in wishing him to be greater, holier or happier than he is; but it will lead us to rejoice in his exaltation and supreme felicity. The apostle could not add to the greatness or blessedness of his Savior, whom he declared to be over all, God blessed forever; yet he could manifest his benevolent regard by adding his *amen* to the declaration. Rom. ix. 5.

But though the essential glory of God admits of no augmentation, there is still scope for the exercise of benevolence towards him; for in the doctrine of the *second* Article we learn, that by means of his works he has begun a manifestation of his glory, in which he takes a real satisfaction, and which is capable of being increased without end. The benevolence existing in the heart of every convert prepares him to rejoice in this manifestation, as the means of honoring the Creator, and giving existence to creatures furnished with capacities both to love and enjoy him. It also prepares him to desire that the uncreated glory may be more fully displayed to the admiring view of all holy creatures, whether on earth or in heaven. "Lord what wilt thou have *me* to do in helping forward the display of thy glory?" is the inquiry of every one whose heart is expanded with benevolence. The more perfect our love, the more entirely shall we seek to promote the declarative glory of God. While God makes *his* glory his chief end, he does not allow us to make a chief end of *our* glory; for between these different ultimate ends there can be no harmony. Experimental religion, if genuine, is the effect of the Spirit of God operating in the heart; and

the people whom he forms for himself, will be prepared to show forth *his* praise, and to do it cordially.

There is a manifest agreement between this Article and the *third*. Indeed, benevolence is nothing different from the moral law, experimentally known. Concerning every good man it is said, *The law of his God is in his heart*. Under the doctrinal part of this work, we were led to consider the law of God as a system of rules, requiring us to exercise disinterested love towards God and our fellow creatures: and now, under the experimental department, the heart of the Christian is displayed to our view as actually exercising that love.

Some are not willing to have Christian experience represented by our returning to the holiness of the moral law. But the holiness of the law and of the gospel is the same. We know that the believer in Christ is dead to the law, as a foundation of his justification; but to regulate his obedience, there can be no rule superior to the moral law. It is absolutely perfect, being a transcript of God's own holy nature. The law, it is true, as contradistinguished from the gospel, enjoins no such duty as repentance towards God, or faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, because it is supposed to be given to creatures who stand in no need of repentance, nor the righteousness of faith. But the repentance and faith required in the gospel, are nothing more than different modifications of that love which the law requires. The same is true of every other grace of the Spirit, which goes to make up the character of the believer in Christ. We acknowledge there is a wide difference between the religion of a legalist (so called) and that of the humble Christian: but the religion of a *legalist*, though he derives his name from the law, is in reality as different from that which is required in the law, as from that which is enjoined in the gospel. Were the love which is required by the law, and that which is experienced by the Christian convert in their very nature unlike, what harmony would there be between the law and the gospel; and how could both emanate from the same divine source?

This Article is harmonious with the *fourth* in the doctrinal series, viz. that which relates to our apostacy and depravity. The harmony appears by the perfect contrast between the depraved and renovated character, which these two Articles respectively exhibit. In *that* we saw creatures forsake God, and *here* we see them return. When they departed, self-gratification led them away; when they return, self is dethroned, and God is again exalted. Apostacy and reconciliation have the same contrariety to each other, as supreme love to self and supreme love to God.

The view which has been given of disinterested love, as constituting the perfection of the Christian character, has an evident agreement with the *fifth* Article. The atonement (the subject of that Article) is a most grand exhibition of benevolence. God's so loving the world as to give his only begotten Son, to redeem rebels from rebellion, both from its spirit and its punishment, is the highest proof of the existence of a love which is disinterested. In this he manifests good will, not to rebels only, but also to those creatures who need no redemption. That declaration of his righteousness, which is made by the death of Christ, was designed, as we have reason to believe, not only to redeem

fallen creatures from the curse of the law, but also to serve as means for preventing others from falling under that curse. The glory of redemption is never truly seen by any, except such as have their hearts enlarged with that charity that seeketh not her own.

When the *sixth* and *seventh* Articles are viewed in their connection, they furnish a strong argument in support of *this*, with which we have begun our experimental system. Would creatures, in the perilous condition of the race of Adam, universally and obstinately reject an offer, to be saved from an eternity of exquisite torments, in case the acceptance of this offer implied nothing more than a religious modification of self-love? If we admit the truth of the two Articles referred to, we shall be compelled to believe, that supreme love to self is our native character; and that supreme love to God is that which is required to give us a title to the salvation of Christ. If efforts of a selfish nature could entitle us to this salvation, the whole unrenewed world would not agree in rejecting the gospel offer. Therefore it is not strange that they, who base their system on well regulated self-love, should expect to be able, without the mighty energy of the Spirit, to persuade men to embrace those offers of deliverance from the wrath to come, which they calculate to enforce by all the arguments and eloquence which they can put in requisition.

Between *this* and the *eighth* Article the harmony is very apparent. If regeneration is a fundamental change, as in *that* Article it was shown to be, the regenerate must possess that unselfish love which has been described in *this*. Without it they can not be radically different from what they were before the change took place. Any system of theology that excludes disinterested affection from its experimental department, must, in order to be consistent, exclude regeneration from the list of its doctrines: for between selfish sinners and selfish converts no radical difference exists. What different nature has selfish repentance from the sin repented of? *Love* and *hatred* are very different names; but when they are both based on selfishness, their natures are alike. What real difference was there between the hatred which Shimei manifested toward king David, when he was driven from his throne, and the love he expressed on the occasion of his restoration?

Some may think, however much selfishness there may be in our love to our fellow men, that we can not love God from selfish motives. Why may not selfishness be the motive in one case as well as in the other? "Sinners love those that love them." When the Lord brought the children of Israel out of Egypt and through the Red Sea, they appeared to love him; they sang his praise, and promised obedience to his laws; but they soon forgot his works. They doubtless thought their love was ardent; but the sequel showed them to be lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. You may adorn the convert with ever so many brilliant characteristics, both external and internal; but if among these characteristics you do not include *love*, even that which rises above every selfish consideration, he is nothing; he still needs conversion; for that selfish heart, which was the fountain of all his wickedness, yet remains. You can point out no radical difference between such a convert, and the world that lieth in wickedness. But as soon as you distinguish your convert by affections which are of a disinterested na-



ture, you present a character that differs essentially from all the unregenerate men in the world. Now we can understand the significancy of that inspired proverb, "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor."

The *ninth* Article relates to the sovereignty of divine grace in regeneration, and the *tenth* to the eternal purpose of God concerning the display of this grace ; and while these doctrines are a bright illustration of the most disinterested benevolence in Him, they require the same enlarged affection on our part, to prepare us for their cordial reception. The sovereign grace of God in predestinating rebels to be conformed to the image of his Son, and then proceeding to bring them into that conformity, is a high display of pure love. His confining this favor to a part, is no proof of anything contracted in his benevolent feelings ; since he has given us satisfactory evidence, that it is through no want of universal good will we are not all chosen to salvation. A candid attention to the sacred volume, will most certainly lead us to this conclusion ; that it was neither malice, nor indifference, towards the happiness of Pharaoh, or Judas, or any other reprobate, which induced the holy Sovereign to leave him out of the number of his elect. He would have included those whom he has left out, had he not seen that with such an arrangement, his glorious name would not have been so fully declared in all the earth. Rom. ix. 17, 18. This reconciled his benevolent heart to their reprobation, that is, to their remaining forever sinful and wretched. The same view of things will quiet the feelings of such of his creatures as are benevolent. That disinterested spirit, which will cause us to desire the salvation of all men, even our enemies, will prevent our murmuring at the sovereignty of grace, though we may have fearful apprehensions concerning the salvation of our friends, and even of our own souls : but selfishness is never pleased that God should have the prerogative of selecting the vessels of mercy ; and will always quarrel with particular election, unless, through some delusive hope, it expects to derive personal advantage from the doctrine.

That love which is not selfish, will prepare the heart to accord with the doctrine of the *eleventh* Article, namely, a free and merciful justification by faith in Christ. Such a justification, when rightly understood, is very pleasing to that heart where self is dethroned and the Lord exalted. As such a justification for revolted subjects, is the only one which establishes the law, it is the only one that will please the benevolent, who have the law written in their hearts, and therefore must rejoice in its establishment.

No disagreement can be discovered between benevolence as an exercise of the heart, and the *twelfth* of our doctrinal Articles. Love to God will lead us to rejoice in that display of his natural, and especially of his moral attributes, which is made in so keeping all his saints in his hand, that none of their steps shall fatally slide ; and our love to his saints will lead us to rejoice, that their amiable character, and consequent blessedness, are secured to them by a covenant which is ordered in all things and sure. Neither is it any proof of selfishness that a loyal subject of the King of Zion, should rejoice that his own loyalty, together with the enjoyment of his Sovereign's favor, is secured by the same gracious covenant.

The next Article in the series of doctrines relates to the general judgment, when we must all appear before the bar of Christ. To the question, "Who may abide the day of his coming?" it may be answered, Every man who is experimentally acquainted with that disinterested religion which has now been described. All such, and none others, will love his appearing. They alone, who have a heart to prefer general to private good, will be prepared cordially to acquiesce in the decisions of the great day, and unite with Christ in passing judgment on all the company of the wicked, though it may include many of those who were their near relatives and friends. In the day of judgment, God will make a separation between the subjects of his moral government, placing all the benevolent on his right hand, and the selfish on his left. He will make it manifest, that their possessing the benevolent character, or their failing to possess it, is the very reason why these places are assigned them. They will be made fully sensible, that had the character of each class been different, their places at the judgment seat would have been reversed.

The society of heaven will be composed of an innumerable company of angels, and a multitude which no man can number redeemed from the earth. Among all this blessed company, selfish affection will have no place, and therefore strife and contention can not enter. They will all be perfectly united to God, the source of being and blessedness; and as they will take a deep interest in each other's happiness, they will do every thing in their power for its promotion. Were one selfish creature to be admitted within the walls of the New Jerusalem, the perfect peace of the holy city would be disturbed. *One selfish affection* would tend to interrupt its perfect tranquillity. They who sustain what among men are called virtuous characters, without any disinterested affections, will be as wholly unmeet for the society, exercises, and enjoyments of heaven, as the vicious themselves.

They whom the Judge will sentence to prison, will all be alike in this respect; they will possess nothing better than a completely selfish character. And as they take no interest in the glory of God and the good of his eternal kingdom, it is proper they should have no part nor lot in the matter. Their selfishness will fit them forever to blaspheme God's holy name, though he will exhibit convincing evidence that he has governed in righteousness, and never for a moment lost sight of the interests of the moral system. They will have no heart to rejoice in the blessedness of the inhabitants of heaven. To their selfish hearts, this blessedness will be a source of misery. And their destitution of benevolence will prevent their having any real sympathy with each other under their sufferings. On the contrary, the scriptures give us reason to believe that the wicked, in the regions of despair, will be much employed in reviling and tormenting each other.

This comprehensive Article in experimental religion agrees with the *last* in the doctrinal department, namely, that which relates to the universal decrees and agency of God. They, who by means of a moral transformation are possessed of true benevolence, stretch their desires abroad, even to the uttermost bounds of the universe. Their wishes are great; but what can such atoms do to accomplish the good they desire? They feel themselves altogether incompetent to devise or ex-

ecute a plan which shall insure it; but they have confidence in the only wise God, that he has ability and disposition to devise and execute that plan which shall display his infinite attributes to the best advantage, and give existence to such a system of creation and providence as shall be most adapted to please all beings possessed of a benevolent heart. This leads them to rejoice to hear that he has a determinate counsel, even before they know what it is; for they are sure it must be wise and benevolent: it also leads them to rejoice to learn, that he worketh all things after the counsel of his will; for this assures them that the plan which was laid in wisdom will be fully executed.

#### REMARKS.

1. We are now furnished with additional internal evidence of the divine origin of the scriptures. We find they inculcate a religion which claims dominion over men's *hearts*; a religion which is not at all satisfied with merely gaining our assent to its doctrines, or our consent to adopt its rites and forms. Nor does this religion approve of any inward affections, except they rise above a selfish interest, and seek the good of a universe of beings. This is the only system of the kind which has ever appeared in our apostate world. And we may rest assured, that such a disinterested scheme was never originated by selfish men. *Their* religious systems have always been based on selfishness. But here is a religion which represents selfishness, in all its shapes and forms, to be nothing better than iniquity, and enmity against God. And who is there that can not see, that a religion, which is based on universal good will, excels every selfish scheme, "as far as light excelleth darkness?" Let that benevolence, which has been described in the foregoing Article, be actually experienced by all the human family, and its result would decide the question as to the origin of the Christian religion; since it would unite and hold together a disunited and contentious world. And this would be a miracle indeed! Selfishness has generated all that disunion and contention which have thus far rendered the earth a field of blood. To effect the removal of these evils, nothing is needed but the universal diffusion of that love which is impartial and disinterested.

2. It is not difficult to perceive that all those systems, which either leave out the internal part of religion, or approbate such affections as aim at no higher end than self-enjoyment, either in this or a future world, must not only be fundamentally erroneous, but ruinous. It is in vain that any of us attempt to make up in quantity an essential defect in the quality of our religion. No scheme of religion can inculcate so much in externals, or in affections, as to render it worthy of the least regard, if it be based on the principle of making our own happiness the ultimate end of our actions. Any scheme of doctrine, which is founded on this principle, is in opposition to the glory of God and the interests of his extensive dominion. Truth in doctrine can be distinguished from error, by its agreement with the principle of disinterested love. To feel indifferent respecting the doctrinal system we shall adopt, is as unwise as for the founder to be indifferent concern-



ing the mold into which he shall pour his liquid metals, when it is his object not only to make a vessel, but to make one of a particular shape and size. For as the metals receive shape from the mold into which they are poured, so does our experimental religion receive its form and character from the scheme of doctrine into which we pour our warm affections; or, in other words, the scheme which we heartily embrace and love. When we *obey from the heart* that form of doctrine which is delivered us in the word of God, our religion is genuine; but when we obey from the heart some other form of doctrine, essentially different from this, our religion must be false. See Rom. vi. 17.

3. In the light reflected by this leading Article in the experimental system, we are able to see that such religious excitements as sanction and promote a selfish religion, and which fill the churches with converts of such a character, are unspeakably mischievous in their tendency. Their tendency would be mischievous, if their converts were not to gain admission within the walls of our Jerusalem; because the influence of such excitements is to bring into disrepute the real work of the Holy Spirit: but when they do gain an admission within her sacred walls, the injury done to the cause of truth and holiness is incalculable. Converts, whose religion is all based on supreme love to themselves, are the bane of the church. One while their zeal is fiery and flaming, and then they have none at all. Having never preferred Jerusalem above their chief joy, they can not be depended on to seek her peace. They constitute the proper materials for heretics of every description. Such converts either make painful work for the discipline of the church, or they are a dead weight to its spiritual interests. While, therefore, we ought to esteem those excitements, which are produced by the clear exhibition of divine truth, applied by the Holy Ghost, to be the greatest of all blessings, let us deprecate those which are of a selfish character. It is possible that where a disinterested scheme of doctrine is preached, it may be accompanied with measures which are of such a deceptive character, as greatly to expose men to trust in a superficial conversion.

4. In deciding on the character of our personal religion, the grand inquiry must be, Is it disinterested? Does it rise above a supreme regard to our own happiness? If we pay our debts, and give of our goods to feed the poor, it does not prove our religion to be of the right kind, in case we are honest and liberal from selfish motives. If we *pray*, and even *love* to pray, the pharisees did the same; but the pride and self-righteousness of their hearts rendered their prayers an abomination to the Lord. Neither is *internal* religion any better than that which is external, if self-love be its source. Nor is love to our neighbor, nor even to God himself, any evidence that our religion is genuine, in case we love them only for the sake of securing our own happiness. Our repentance, faith, submission, and other graces, must all be brought to this test; we must be able to see that there is something of a disinterested nature in them, before we can determine our religion to be such as will meet the approbation of our Judge.

## ARTICLE II.

COMPLACENCE IN HOLINESS IS BOTH COMMON AND PECULIAR TO ALL HOLY BEINGS.

COMPLACENCE, as well as benevolence, is in the scriptures denominated *love*. God is said to love the righteous, and to hate and abhor the wicked. The meaning is, that God has feelings of complacency towards the righteous, while his feelings towards the wicked are entirely the reverse. When *benevolent* affection is the thing in view, it is proper to say, that God loves the wicked, as well as the righteous. There is, therefore, a manifest distinction between benevolence and complacency, though both are comprehended in the word *love*. Goodwill is of the same import as benevolence, and *delight* the same as *complacency*. The former may and ought to be strong, where there is no goodness of character; but the latter can not be consistently exercised at all, except where there is something amiable in the object; and should always be proportionate to the degree of amiableness which is manifested.

*Holiness* is a word extensively used to describe that which is amiable in the character of moral agents. Those men, who have been renewed in the spirit of their mind, *delight in holiness*: and in this they agree with all the good beings in the universe. EVERY HOLY BEING EXERCISES COMPLACENCE IN EVERY OTHER HOLY BEING, BUT IN NONE OF A DIFFERENT CHARACTER. God delights in the *holy* angels, but not in those that sinned. The former are said always to *behold his face*; which expression must import their uninterrupted enjoyment of his smiles. But his abhorrence of the latter he manifested when he cast them down to hell; and he continues to manifest it by their being reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. And all this difference of feeling towards the angels of light and the angels of darkness, is in view of their different characters. Were the holy and the wicked angels to exchange characters, the delight and the abhorrence which the Almighty Ruler now exercises towards them respectively, would be immediately reversed.

While the apostate angels hate the God of holiness, the angels of light have complacency in him; and for this very reason, that he is a God of holiness. It is with delightful admiration "they cry one to another, saying, *Holy, holy, holy*, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." They appear to be ravished with the displays of divine holiness, with which they perceive the whole earth to be filled. In these displays the apostate angels take no *delight*, though they probably serve to increase their *convictions* of the goodness of the divine character. They were far from being pleased with the Savior, even when constrained to acknowledge him to be "the Holy One of God."

Among the children of Adam, God confines his complacential love to such as possess a holy character: "I love them that love me." "God

judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day." "For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; *his countenance doth behold the upright.*" Prov. viii. 17. Ps. vii. 11, and xi. 7. The reason of such opposite feelings towards these two classes of men, is implied in the very names by which they are distinguished. That the *righteousness* of the one, and the *wickedness* of the other, form the whole ground of the delight and abhorrence, which the Most High exercises towards them respectively, is made evident by this; that whenever any one belonging to the class of the wicked is transformed, and becomes possessed of the character of the righteous, he is no longer abhorred, but immediately becomes an object of divine complacency.

Let us go where we will, we shall find the assertion true, that *holy beings exercise complacency in such as are holy, and in none else.* In our apostate world, the *saints* have complacency in God; and for this very reason, because he is holy; while sinners, who remain under the dominion of sin, are for the very same reason displeased with him. Nothing is more common in the sacred writings, than to distinguish these two classes of men by their *love* and *hatred* of God. The saints are represented as loving God and delighting in him: but concerning sinners it is said, they do not like to retain God in their knowledge. Rom. i. 28. It is also manifest that the same holy character, which attracts the one class to him, is the very thing which drives the other from him. The saints exalt the Lord their God, and worship at his footstool, because he is *holy*. They glory in his *holy* name. They say of him, "He is glorious in holiness." Ps. xcix. 5; cv. 3. Ex. xv. 11. But to those who are not recovered from the dominion of sin, "His ways are always grievous." And that it is the holiness of his ways which render them grievous, is proved by this; they say to God's messengers, "Cause the HOLY ONE of Israel to cease from before us." Ps. x. v. Isa. xxx. 11. The very thing which fills heaven with blessedness, renders *them* unhappy.

The saints exercise the love of complacency towards their fellow saints, towards all of them, and none others. However strong their *benevolent* feelings are towards the impenitent, (and for some of them they can truly say that they have great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart,) still they confine their complacency to such as are partakers of the divine nature. David calls the saints, that are in the earth, the excellent, and then adds, *In whom is all my delight.* Ps. xvi. 3. In all these excellent characters he had delight; and to them was it restricted. That love to the *brethren*, mentioned by the apostle John as a distinguishing mark of true grace, must mean a complacency in their holy character; for this alone is the love which is to be restricted to them. All those who have passed from death unto life, love their brethren in Christ, for the truth's sake that is in them. There are some of those, in whom they have no delight, that have every thing, except holiness of character, to draw forth their complacency. They have talents, refinement, affluence, generosity, and a high standing in society; and among this number there may be some who are allied to them by the tenderest ties of nature: and yet they can not feel that union of heart with any of them which they have with their brethren in Christ. But as soon as the most unlovely, among the enemies of the Lord, and



even among their own personal enemies, throw down the weapons of their rebellion, and give evidence of a holy character, they immediately become objects of their complacency. In the light reflected by the scriptures on this subject, several things are made very manifest.

1. That *holiness* is the bond of union among all beings of a holy character. Since every holy being loves with complacency every other such being, whether superior or inferior, whether in his own or any other world; and since, in this peculiar sense, he loves none else, it must be evident, that their *holiness* is the whole ground of their mutual love, that is, their delight in one another. Holiness, in the estimation of this whole class of beings, is that which constitutes their moral beauty or amiableness. The scriptures speak of "the *beauties* of holiness, and of the *beauty* of the Lord," and of his "*beautifying* the meek with salvation;" which consists in expelling sin from their hearts by the introduction of holy affections. Ps. cx. 3; xxvii. 4; cxlix. 4. In holiness of character consists all the beauty of the Infinite Mind, and of all created minds.

2. This mutual complacency among holy beings is not a *selfish* or *partial* affection. There is in it no respect of persons; *character*, irrespective of the *person* possessing it, is the only thing which is regarded as an object of delight. They do not love holiness in themselves, because it is their *own*; for they love it as much in others as in themselves. God has infinitely more complacency in himself than he has in his creatures; and for this reason, that he has an infinitely greater share of moral excellency. His children on earth do not love their own character because it is their own; for just so far as their character is unholy, it is in their own view unlovely, and they abhor themselves. They not unfrequently have more delight and confidence in their brethren than in themselves, because they believe them to be possessed of a greater degree of that which constitutes amiableness of character. According to the apostolic injunction, they "esteem others better than themselves." Phil. ii. 3. Rom. xii. 10.

3. This complacency, which holy beings have in each other, is an exercise of *heart*. It is not a mere assent of the understanding to the excellent nature of holiness, but a sweet delight in it. They who delight in holiness, are thereby united in the bond of perfectness. They are of *one heart* and *one soul*, even though their number may amount to a multitude. Acts iv. 32. Such as have no complacency in holiness may be convinced that it nevertheless forms the only true excellency of character; for the word of God has declared, "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor:" and sometimes they witness the fruits of this superior excellency. Saul appears to have been fully convinced that David possessed an excellency of character which he himself did not, when he said, "Thou art more righteous than I." But his conviction differed widely from the complacency which Jonathan his son exercised towards the same person; a description of which is given in these emphatic words: "And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that *the soul of Jonathan was knit unto the soul of David; and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.*" 1 Sam. xviii. 1. The love of holiness produces the sweetest union of holy minds.

4. This bond of perfectness which unites holy beings, lays a foundation for *delightful intercourse*. They love to think and speak of each other; especially to *commune together*. The psalmist spoke the mind of the whole renovated generation, when he said, in an address to God, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee." Ps. cxix. 63. They who are born of God love the society of their brethren; and they love it most, when they perceive them to make the clearest exhibition of that character by which they are distinguished from the men of the world.

The saints greatly delight in communion with God; and it is not merely because they are dependent on him, and can not live without his help. The enjoyment they have in prayer, arises very much from the advantage which this duty affords them of contemplating his holiness. And God himself takes pleasure in holding communion with his people, because of the holy beauty he sees in them. It is the Bridegroom of the church who says, "Let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely."

5. This complacency which we are considering, is manifestly a *right* frame of heart. It is an approbation of that which in its nature is right. It is a love to the truth, and to those who have known the truth, for the truth's sake that dwelleth in them; and is therefore itself "truth in the inward parts." It is self-evident that holiness is beautiful and lovely, in distinction from sin. The judgment even of the unholy will decide in favor of it: therefore the complacency which the regenerate have in each other, and which is restricted to beings of a holy character, is a striking proof that they are in reality *saints*, or holy ones. Were they to exercise the same complacency towards men of an opposite character; were they to delight in the enemies of the Lord as they do in his friends, the evidence of a radical change would be lost. As to the love of good will, were we not to extend it to the wicked as well as the righteous, we could have no claim to the Christian character; but the reverse is true of that kind of love of which we are now treating: for if we were to extend our complacency to the wicked as well as the righteous, there could be no evidence that we ourselves were righteous. It is spoken of as an evidence that our Redeemer's character was excellent, that he loved righteousness and hated wickedness.

I wish to have it kept in mind, every step we proceed in our search after the right way, that as soon as we have discovered any truth, in doctrine, in experience, or practice, we have discovered something that has *all the word of God* in its favor. The same inspired book, which every where requires us to exercise good will to all men, not excepting the vilest, does as uniformly restrict our complacency to the men who love God and keep his commandments. Were it not so, the Bible would be at variance with itself: but now it is harmonious. Of this we shall form a better conception, when we proceed to take a view of

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

The harmony between this Article of experimental religion, and the one going before it, with which we commenced the series, is very

manifest. Under that Article it was shown, that benevolent beings seek a *general* good, while those devoid of benevolence confine their regard to themselves. It was shown, that all true excellency of character consists in this expansive love, in its various branches; and that *selfishness*, which is its opposite, is comprehensive of all sin. With this exhibition of benevolence, as the foundation of experimental religion, what can be more harmonious than the *complacency* which has just now been described. In the order of nature, the love of benevolence precedes the love of complacency, both in the *subject* and *object* of the affection, that is, both in the one who loves and in the one who is loved. Holy complacency can not exist in your mind until benevolence is there to originate it; and it can not go forth towards your neighbor, until benevolence shall appear in him, to render him an attractive object.

Under the present Article it has been shown (and I trust to every one's satisfaction) that holy beings confine their delight to such as are holy; though their good will is extended to all, irrespective of character. And is it not perfectly easy to understand why they do so? They confine their delight to the *holy*, because they extend their good will to *all*. They can delight in none, who are enemies to the infinite good they seek. As far as they are benevolent, they invariably seek the diffusion of happiness, which, indeed, is all comprised in seeking the glory of God. No consideration can induce them to relinquish this ultimate end. Were the Christian to be told, that the pursuit of his darling object would cost him his life, his religion, if in suitable exercise, would prepare him to reply, "I am ready not to be bound only, but to die, for the name of the Lord Jesus." While benevolent beings are earnestly seeking the advancement of the great and everlasting kingdom of Jehovah, they look around the universe, to see who are united with them in seeking this glorious object; and just as many as appear to give evidence of loving what they love, and seeking what they seek, they spontaneously delight in, and receive into the number of their friends.

To say, complacency is exercised by all holy beings towards those of the same character, is to say, that benevolent beings delight in one another *on account of their benevolence*. The way is now prepared for us to see why they have such a sweet, uniting affection towards each other. It is not merely because they have *one kind* of character; for this is true of beings who are selfish, who are nevertheless described as "hateful and hating one another." The reason is this: benevolent beings agree in loving supremely a *common* object; and one infinitely worthy of concentrating all their affections. Selfish beings agree in this; that *every one seeks his own things*. Here are as many centres as there are individuals. The thing is illustrated in the world of nature, by what is called the attraction of repulsion. But benevolent beings, like the planets, are all drawn around a common centre; or, like the different particles composing the same body, they cleave together and become one. If you prefer Jerusalem above your chief joy, you must of necessity be pleased with every man who gives you evidence that he does the same; and so long as your confidence in his sincerity shall remain, your pleasedness with his character must also



remain. And who can help seeing, that if it is right to exercise good will towards the whole universe, it must of course be right to exercise complacence towards all who give evidence of possessing that disinterested affection? And if it is right to exercise the love of complacence towards these, on this very account, it must be equally proper to withhold it from all those who possess a different character. A displeasedness with the character of wicked men, as well as complacency towards those that are good, is evidential of a sanctified heart: "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with a perfect hatred; I count them mine enemies." Ps. cxxxix. 21, 22. This was not a hatred excited by malice; but the hatred which holiness has towards sin. All such as are not recovered from the depravity of nature, are at heart hostile to the kingdom of Christ. To exercise complacency towards men of their character, would be incompatible with supreme love to Christ and attachment to his holy cause.

The correctness of this *second* Article rests on that of the *first*; and *this* can not be gainsayed, while the truth of *that* is acknowledged. If disinterested benevolence is a holy affection, constituting the root of all that experimental religion which is approved by the word of God, it is most certain that complacency, extended to all the benevolent, and to them alone, must be one of its first and most natural branches.

This branch of experimental religion, I am persuaded, will be found to agree with the *doctrines* of the gospel, particularly as they are exhibited under Part I. It agrees with the *first* doctrine, which relates to the existence and perfection of God. While benevolence contemplates the Deity as infinitely *great*, and says, Let him be glorified,—let him be blessed forever! complacence contemplates him as infinitely *good*, and makes him the object of supreme delight. His benevolent regard to the interests of the universe, altogether surpasses the united benevolence of men and angels; he is, therefore, the grand object of holy complacency. Holy creatures delight themselves in the Lord, and that not merely because he has commanded them, and they must do it, or expose themselves to his eternal displeasure; but their love is without dissimulation. They are sincere when they say, "There is none holy as the Lord:" and when they call God their "exceeding joy." 1 Sam. ii. 2. Ps. xliii. 4.

Passing over the *second* Article of doctrines, as not being sufficiently different from the first to be here distinctly noticed, let us see how this branch of experience agrees with the *third*, namely, that which relates to the perfection of the law. The law is not a moral agent, and is not therefore holy in the same sense with its divine Author; but as a bright expression of his holy nature, it must be an object of delight to all those who have complacency in holy beings. David said, "O how love I thy law!" and Paul, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." A law so calculated to secure the honor of the Supreme King, and to promote order and happiness among his subjects, must be delighted in by all who wish well to the interests of the universe. The whole of revealed truth is of the same pure nature as the law, and is therefore adapted to please the taste of all such as are born of the Spirit. Each one can say, "Thy word is very pure; therefore thy ser-

vant loveth it." Ps. cxix. 140. The purity of God's word consists in this, that it is all of it, whether it be doctrine or precept, law or gospel, so constructed as to favor the system of benevolence, and put down every thing which is founded on selfishness. Were the word of God, like all the false systems of religion on earth, so constructed as to favor selfishness, it could not be said to be very pure ; or even pure at all. Had this been the character of the Bible, there could have been no evidence of its being the word of God : neither could such men as are redeemed from iniquity have been pleased with it.

The *next* Article presents to our view man's apostacy from God. With this unprovoked rebellion holy complacency has no fellowship, though it gives full credit to the testimony of the scriptures in relation to it ; but the atonement, which is exhibited in the *succeeding* Article, is viewed with intense interest and great satisfaction ; whether it be considered as the means of unfolding, to the best advantage, the glory of the benevolent Creator, or of augmenting the blessedness of his creatures.

How, it will be said, can Christians, who embrace in their benevolent desires the whole world, take any pleasure in such doctrines as *sovereign grace* and *particular election* ? But is there nothing to gratify benevolent hearts in doctrines which represent the Father of mercies as resolutely determined to subdue and save a multitude of rebellious men, notwithstanding their infinite guilt and deadly opposition to his holy dominion ? But some will say, How can we have complacency in doctrines, which suppose another multitude to be passed by, as not included in the election of grace ? We answer, By our possessing the temper of Jesus Christ, who, rejoiced in spirit, and said, " I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes : even so, Father ; for so it seemed good in thy sight." Christ was benevolent, and yet he rejoiced in the distinguishing grace of his Father. His Father, too, was benevolent ; and yet this distinguishing grace, in revealing to babes what he hid from the wise and prudent, seemed good in His sight. What satisfied the infinitely kind heart of our Redeemer, should satisfy us. Of this we may be certain, that while it is benevolence that prompts the Father to draw some of our guilty reluctant race to his Son, it is not through any deficiency of this amiable spirit, that others are left to refuse proffered mercy, and perish. The difference which is now made by sovereign grace, will be seen at the day of judgment, and thence onward through interminable ages. They who have complacency in the holiness of God's character, which is displayed in what is done in this world, will be prepared to enjoy the scenes of the judgment day, and the display of his glory which will be made by the retributions of eternity.

Benevolent minds, when properly enlightened, can not fail to be delighted with the truths of the closing Article of the doctrinal series, namely, That God has a plan, embracing all existences and events ; which he will unfold to the admiring view of all his friends in heaven and earth. The decrees are nothing less than the best possible plan of infinite wisdom to do good : and the agency of God, without implying any operation inconsistent with his holiness, gives a real exist-

ence to this best of all plans. This doctrine affords pleasure to holy creatures, not only when they view it as a consistent part of a system of theology; but also when they view it as standing in an immediate connection with the moral perfection of the Most High. Their contemplation of it serves greatly to promote their complacency in his character. This doctrine shows them that their Creator is not, like the haughty monarchs of this world, an inactive being, whose happiness consists in throwing from his mind and from his hands the care of a dependent universe. On the contrary, it represents him as employing his wisdom in planning, and his power in executing, every thing great and minute in relation to its interests. All who have any benevolent concern for these vast and enduring interests, must rejoice to find that His concern for them infinitely surpasses their own; they must rejoice to learn, that the counsels of his unlimited mind, and the operations of his all-powerful hand, are unremittingly employed in their furtherance.

## REMARKS.

1. *Spiritual discernment*, or divine illumination, which often occupies a distinct place in systems of theology, seems to be nothing different from that complacency in holiness which is the direct consequence of our becoming possessed of a benevolent heart. There is nothing enigmatical or inexplicable in that peculiar discernment of divine things which the scriptures attribute to the spiritual man. 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15. It is wholly the effect of a renovation of heart; and is nothing else but benevolent affection taking complacency in objects of a like nature. God is love; and whatever he does or says, partakes of his benevolent nature; and when any of us become possessed of such pure love, as that which constitutes the glory of his character, we must necessarily take pleasure in the display of his love. The pleasure which we take is called by different names, such as delight in God, complacency in holiness, spiritual discernment of divine things, and the like; but by whatever name it is distinguished, it is the same thing which has been described in the preceding Article—it is a union of heart to every thing which is of a holy nature—it is a complacency in holy things on account of their moral beauty and loveliness. It is much the same as loving holiness for its own sake. The love of holiness for its own sake, is such a love as no one exercises, who is not holy, who is not benevolent. What Edwards denominates the primary beauty of virtue or holiness, is seen by none but those that are virtuous or holy. There is a secondary beauty, which can be discovered by the understanding, without the concurrence of the heart. Such a discovery, however, does not change us into the same glorious image. But when the primary or moral beauty of holiness is discovered, and when it is loved for its own sake, it is accompanied with a desire to be beautified with holiness; and this desire is proportionate to the clearness of the discovery we make.

2. While this Article is before us, we shall do well to take notice of an important distinction that exists between two things, which are often confounded, namely, *love to the brethren*, and *love to a party*. The



first is an evidence that we have passed from death unto life : but the last may be a sad proof that we are yet dead in trespasses and sins. Brotherly love is a complacency in those who bear the image of Christ ; it is a complacency in holiness for its own sake. So far as this prevails, it destroys a party spirit. Brainerd, at a certain time, had his heart so enlarged with love to Christ and all his friends, that he expressed his feelings by saying, "I hated the thought of a party in religion." It is the nature of a party spirit to look with more complacency on some favorite appendage of religious worship, than on the most fundamental doctrine or the most exemplary walk. But brotherly love looks for more unequivocal evidence of a holy character, than some sectarian *shibboleth* ; and when that evidence is obtained, it refuses to withdraw the hand of fellowship on account of minor differences.

3. We now see what is the proper method for Christians to take, to increase their mutual delight in each other : let them all study to possess more of that amiableness of character which will draw forth the complacency of their brethren. Those who complain that their brethren do not love them, that is, with complacency, ought to inquire, whether they have clearly exhibited before them the Christian character. If we would have our brethren delight in us as *Christians*, we must live as *Christians*. Short of our doing this, we can lay no claim to anything more than the love of good will. Whoever will make the experiment, to keep his lamp trimmed, that is, keep himself in the love of God, will soon become an object of delight to all such of his brethren as have known the grace of God in truth.

4. Heaven will be a happy place ; since all its inhabitants will exercise a perfect complacency in each other. They will all be benevolent to perfection, and will delight in one another on this account. There will not be an individual there who is not lovely ; nor one that is not loved by all the rest. What a privilege to be a qualified member of a society so perfectly holy. And how evident it must be to every thinking mind, that holiness must be an essential requisite to membership.

5. Attention to this Article suggests one reason why the benevolence which the Christian exercises towards his impenitent neighbor, leads him to desire his conversion ; it is natural he should desire to see the object of his compassion become an object of delight, both to himself and to God. Joseph exercised great solicitude for the welfare of his brethren ; therefore he took much pains to bring them to that penitential and pious frame of mind, which would render them proper objects of his complacency, and of the complacency of God himself. That benevolent concern which pious parents have for their children, makes them long exceedingly for their conversion ; and this is among the reasons why their conversion appears so desirable ; it will render them fit objects for their Christian complacency. Then they who are dear in the flesh, will also be dear in the Lord.

## ARTICLE III.

## SUBMISSION TO GOD IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE EXPERIMENTAL SYSTEM.

SUBMISSION includes *reconciliation* and *resignation*. A *reconciliation* to God implies the previous existence of rebellion, on the part of those who have become reconciled; but the thing which is expressed by *resignation* is common to all who love God, whether they have, or have not been rebels against his government.\* The holy Jesus was never called upon, like his brethren, the children of Adam, to become reconciled to God; but a cheerful resignation to the divine will was His duty, as well as theirs.

The commands, "Be ye reconciled to God," and "Submit yourselves unto God," are binding on all men. 2 Cor. v. 20. Jam. iv. 7. These commands oblige those who are in a state of revolt, immediately to lay down their weapons of rebellion, and repair to the standard of the Prince of Peace; and those who have already laid down their weapons, to become still more loyal; and those who have practised resignation to the will of God, to be more entirely resigned. Submission forms one of those traits of character, by which the men of grace differ from their fellow men; but since this, as well as the other parts of experimental religion, has its counterfeits, it is important we should understand how we may distinguish that which is genuine. That submission to God, which is enjoined on all men, and which actually exists in all who are born of the Spirit, has such distinguishing features as these:

1. It is a submission which is *universal*, in distinction from being limited to any particular part of the divine conduct. The man of grace submits to God in all those characters by which he bears a relation to his creatures. He submits to him as *Creator*—as the former of his body and the father of his spirit. He does not question his right to create a world of matter, or of minds. He does not say, Why was I forced into existence without my consent, with a mortal body, and an immortal, but depraved mind? He feels the propriety of that rebuke, "Wo unto him that striveth with his Maker: shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?" Isa. xlv. 9. Submission yields to Him who inhabits eternity the right of originating a dependent universe, and such a one as seems good to himself.

The Christian submits to God as the *Disposer of events*. The scriptures lead us to view the agency of God, as being equally concerned in bringing into existence those providential events which take place, as that world which we behold. Without him there is not a sparrow that falleth on the ground. "Shall there be evil in the city,

\* It is in view of the first of these branches of submission that I have been led to give this Article so early a place in our experimental system.

and the Lord hath not done it?" Among the passing events, which come within our knowledge, there are not a few which are very unwelcome. In view of such events the wicked man replies against God, and "would fain flee out of his hand." But the good man holds his peace, and says, "Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord." Job. xxvii. 22. 1 Chron. xxi. 13.

The good man submits to God in his character of *moral Governor*. God claims the right of ruling his rational creatures by a moral government; that is, by a law containing requirements and prohibitions, enforced by penalties. Though this claim is most righteous, yet, as a world of apostates, we are all opposed to it. The language of our heart, and, to a great extent, the language of our practice, is, We know not the Lord, in the character of Moral Governor, neither will we obey his voice. But such as are renewed in the spirit of their mind, are prepared to yield to this claim. They are willing to be under law. They do not wish to be lawless, or to be under a law less strict than that which the divine Lawgiver wrote, with his own finger, on the tables of stone.

There is another very important character, which God assumes in relation to this apostate world, namely, the *Dispenser of grace*: and in this character he is most cheerfully submitted to by all who have known the grace of God in truth. Such are ready to submit to the God of grace, on the very terms he has proposed. They do not ask him to relinquish any of his claims as Creator and Governor of the world. They are willing to return unto Him, instead of his returning unto them. They wish to have it known through the whole moral system, that they are not restored to favor on the ground of innocence, or the small degree of their guilt; but on the contrary, that they have received an unmerited pardon, through an infinitely valuable sacrifice, and at the intercession of him who died for their redemption. Nor would they be contented with receiving a pardon, without also receiving the spirit of reconciliation, the spirit of loyalty to the government of the supreme King.

2. Submission, when genuine, is *intelligent* and *cordial*. He who exercises it, knows to whom he submits, and the reasons for doing it. The psalmist says, "They who know thy name will put their trust in thee." No man can trust in God, unless he has some right views of his character. And the same is true concerning the exercise of submission. When any one submits, just for the sake of securing his salvation, without having discovered the glory of the divine character, such submission is a senseless thing. Let it be ever so intelligent, if it be not also *cordial*, it is worthless. It is common to all the true subjects of Messiah's kingdom, to be voluntary in their surrender to his authority: "Thy people shall be *willing* in the day of thy power."—Ps. cx. 3. They differ considerably in the degree of their loyalty, but not in its nature. They all submit to the same holy Sovereign, and on his own terms. They do not do it with their eyes closed. As they know in whom they have believed, so they know to whom they have submitted. Understanding what he requires, they yield a cheerful consent to those requirements.

Resignation to those afflictive events which God brings upon us,



implies no delight in the afflictions themselves, but a delight and confidence in God, though his chastenings are not joyous but grievous. The rod is submitted to, on account of the hand which holds it : "It is the *Lord*, let him do what seemeth him good." This is a very different thing from submitting to fate ; or submitting to an event, merely because we can not help it. The believer well knows, that when clouds and darkness are round about Jehovah, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. This prepares the way for him to yield an acquiescence to the divine will, which is both intelligent and cordial.

3. Genuine submission is *unconditional*. He who is the subject of it, does not approach his Maker with conditions for him to consent to. He does not say, if some particular attributes, which the scriptures have claimed for Jehovah, can be expunged from the list, or some objectionable articles from the doctrines, or some unpleasant injunctions from the precepts, or if some alteration can be made in the way of acceptance, or some change in the system of providence, then I will submit. Nor does he say, I will submit to God, provided I can be sure that he will save me from punishment. He submits without proposing all or any of these conditions. He can not wait to know whether these conditions will be complied with, but hastens to fall at the feet of his injured Sovereign, to acknowledge his right to reign over him, and to reign over all.

Perhaps it will be said, conditions on the part of the divine government are proposed to the sinner, and therefore when he submits to God, he can not but do it in view of them ; and since pardon is one of these conditions, he can not submit without knowing it will result in pardon. I know there is a promise of pardon to such as cease from their hostility and become reconciled to God : but it is not proposed as a compromise with a rebel, nor is it designed to render the Supreme Ruler an object worthy of his fealty. Christ suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring *us unto God*. The peace which the ministry of reconciliation is designed to negotiate, is briefly this : "That God was in Christ *reconciling the world unto himself*, not imputing their trespasses unto them." This supposes that God, just as he is, and always has been, is worthy of our love and loyal obedience. God does not become reconciled to us as rebels against his government ; nor does he consent to relinquish his claims, or any part of them, on condition that we will give up our rebellion and return to allegiance. In settling a permanent peace, a peace which will be ratified in the court of heaven, we must renounce our rebellion as most unreasonable and impious, and become reconciled to God as holy, just, and true ; as the Author of that law which requires perfect holiness, and which forbids all sin, even in the affections of the heart, under the penalty of eternal death ; and as the Avenger of his broken law, who declares himself under no obligation to remit this penalty in a single instance ; and who will actually execute it on a great multitude of his revolted subjects.

Were it a possible thing that the government of the universe should now be made *elective*, they who have a heart to submit to God, would place the crown on His head, and choose to be forever under His dominion. Their feelings are widely different from those of rebels,

who, being driven to straits, agree to make a surrender of themselves to their sovereign, on condition of an amnesty ; but who are determined, if they can not obtain conditions thus favorable, to do their best in maintaining their independence. There is no such condition in the surrender of him whose rebellious will is subdued. He becomes unfeignedly reconciled to God, whether the receiving of a pardon shall be the consequence or not.

But it will be said, the sinner has previous assurance given him, that the moment he submits to God he shall be pardoned ; therefore in submitting he can not overlook this condition. Is it not, however, a plain case, in which the moral sense of all will agree, that if we submit only *for the sake of obtaining pardon*, it is no real reconciliation to God ? Nor do I think an unconditional submission is rendered impossible by the promises which are held out to those who exercise it. By means of the promises, we learn that God will not impute the trespasses of such as become reconciled. Yet so long as any one remains unreconciled, he can never know that *his* trespasses will not be imputed to him. But even while he is in this state, he may imagine his sins are forgiven, and on this very account feel as if he had become reconciled. And is not this the place where many have been deceived to their everlasting ruin ? In their distress they desire comfort ; and to obtain it, they appropriate to themselves some divine promise, while rebellion has full possession of their heart ; and in view of this promise, which they suppose secures their salvation, they consent to submit themselves to divine authority. But is not a hope of forgiveness thus acquired both presumptuous and unwarrantable ? There is no promise which any man can lay claim to, as his own, until he shall have laid down the weapons of his rebellion. It is therefore while he views himself as a condemned, unpardoned rebel, that he surrenders and becomes reconciled to his offended sovereign. Nor is there any consistent way for assurance to be given him, that he, in distinction from the rest of the rebel army, has received pardon, until he shall perceive that the spirit of reconciliation and loyalty has taken possession of his heart. The submission on his part is therefore as completely *unconditional*, as if no promise had ever been made to sinners of this character. The prayer of the publican, *God be merciful to me a sinner*, (which is a prayer that is certainly proper to be made by every man,) represents humbled rebels, deeply convinced of their destitute condition, casting themselves on the mere mercy of God. All those who by the energies of the Holy Ghost have the law applied to their conscience, and their sins thereby disclosed to their view, are ready to say, "God is right, and we are wrong."—*It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed.*

Submission is a very important branch of Christian experience. It is by no means limited to that first act of reconciliation which brings back a rebel to his allegiance. Its influence will be needed every subsequent day of his life, to preserve him from breaking the treaty of peace which has been concluded, and to prevent his renewing hostilities against the divine government.

Submission comprehends in it all that giving up of our concerns into the hands of God, and patient endurance of his chastenings, which the

precepts of his word, and the events of his providence, are so continually urging upon us. It supposes our will to be submitted to the will of God. We may have strong desires to obtain a good, or avoid an evil, which it may not be the will of God that we should obtain or avoid; and yet not be chargeable with insubmission, provided we are content that his will should prevail. "Not as I will, but as thou wilt."

It is a question, which has been much agitated, whether submission to God implies a willingness to endure future punishment. On this point I would first remark; that the most unconditional submission can not imply such an indifference as leaves us no choice. The perfect submission of the Savior did not render him indifferent to pain; nor did it do anything to confound the distinction which exists between natural good and evil; happiness still appeared in itself altogether more desirable than its opposite. We may therefore be assured that no such submission is required of us, as will imply that we have no choice between eternal life and eternal death. Nor is it pretended by those who advocate this doctrine, in the most unlimited extent, that any submission, which we are required to exercise in regard to future punishment, will release us from obligation to repent of our sins and embrace the offers of salvation: or from striving, even to an agony, provided we strive lawfully, to enter in at the strait gate. Luke xiii. 24.

But it will be said, The scriptures require us to be willing to be *saved*—not to be *damned*. It is true they require us to be willing to be saved, but it is with such a salvation as supposes our damnation would be just. It is a salvation, the glory of which we can not see, without we can also see the glory of vindictive wrath. There is then no want of agreement between our submitting to punishing justice, and at the same time hoping in pardoning mercy. In the light of the glorious gospel, it is seen that a *sin-punishing* and a *sin-pardoning* God is the same character. Were we to teach sinners, that they ought to hope in his mercy, but not submit to his justice, we should greatly expose them to a false peace; and to flatter themselves that they have become reconciled to God, merely because they are willing to be exempted from that strange punishment which is threatened to the workers of iniquity. But fallen spirits may exercise such a submission as this; for we hear one of them praying, "I beseech thee torment me not." Luke viii. 28.

There are some who say, It is not consistent that we should be required to exercise submission in view of future punishment, since it would, in effect, require a willingness to be forever in a state of enmity against God. Here let it be remembered, that the thing to which we are required to submit, is *punishment*; that is, in case it should please the Most High to execute upon us the penalty we have incurred. If it be necessary to connect sinfulness of character with the subjects of punishment, our submission to the will of God in the infliction of punishment, does not imply complacency in sin; but rather in God as the punisher of it. To yield submission to God, in view of our own punishment, no more implies a delight in sin, than to yield it in view of the punishment of our fellow men. It is made perfectly



certain by the word of truth, that some of mankind will be punished forever, and it is made equally certain that they will forever be possessed of a sinful character. And are we not required to exercise submission to God in determining their character, as well as their punishment? Our submission to the divine will respecting the *character* of the reprobate, no more implies complacency in sin, than when our submission relates to the infliction of punishment. The truth is, that a benevolent heart has no delight in either their sin or their misery. It is only in the *good*, which the God of wisdom will bring out of these evils, that we can have any delight.

Why can not this matter be explained by recurring to a certain particular in the experience of every Christian? By consulting the scripture (which can not be broken) the Christian is well assured, that it is the wise purpose of God never to perfect his sanctification in this life. And is it not his duty to submit; and does he not actually yield submission to the will of God in this thing? And now I would ask, Does his submitting to the protraction of his life, necessarily suppose his complacency in that protraction of sin which will be its consequence? Paul desired to depart and be with Christ, where he should be freed from all sinful imperfection: and yet, in view of the edification of the church, he was contented to remain longer on the earth, where he knew he should never be wholly freed from sin. Did his submission to the will of God, in prolonging his stay in this state of imperfection, imply delight in the imperfection itself? Every one knows it did not. The more cordially the Christian is reconciled to the will of God, in so arranging things as not to complete his sanctification in this life, the more will he hate sin, and watch, and pray, and strive against it. When any possess that frame of heart, which prepares them to accept the punishment of their sins in the full extent, as it relates to this and the future state, they will be most careful to forsake their sins, and guard against the repetition of them. When David surrendered himself up into the hands of justice, acknowledging that God would be justified and clear in judging; that is, in sentencing him to receive the punishment of his sins, still he earnestly desired a clean heart and a right spirit. A desire for sanctification, and watchfulness against sin, will be in proportion to the degree of our submission; and for this reason, that submission is of a holy nature, and therefore the more entire it is, the more will it prepare us to resist the devil.

Some may think there is no room in *Christian experience* for submission, as it relates to future punishment, since it is known to be discordant with the plan of redemption, that one true convert should perish. The sure promises of the covenant of grace will not, however, preclude such submission from having a place in those incipient experiences, which we must have before we can possibly know that we are interested in this covenant: and have we not reason to believe there are some of the children of God, who all along entertain doubts concerning the genuineness of their religion? How, I ask, ought such persons to feel, when their fears prevail over their hopes? Ought they to go through their whole life, contending with the Almighty, because they have remaining fears that they shall be the objects of his

displeasure in the world to come? Every Christian will say, No, they ought to love God, and submit to his holy will concerning their destiny, whether it be in life eternal or death eternal. It ought to be the language of each of their hearts, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

But even a Christian who has an *assurance* of hope, may be the subject of this submission. He may see at particular times, that God has given him such a degree of reconciliation to his holy government that he could submit, and not charge God foolishly, were the penalty of the law to be executed upon him. Such a spirit as this appears to have been manifested by David at the time he was driven from Jerusalem by the rebellion of his unnatural son. He said to Zadok, "Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his habitation. *But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.*" We may, through divine help, be able to say concerning particular evils, which we do not expect to be called to suffer, and which we do not imagine to be consistent with providential arrangements, that we could submit to them, if they were to be laid upon us. Christians who shall live in the millenium, may be able to see that their love to Christ is such, that they could burn at the stake rather than deny him.

The sentiment which I am now wishing to impress, has a striking illustration in the history of that pious monarch, to whom I just now referred. When his son Absalom was dead, and it was too late for him to die in his room, still he could know that he would willingly have done it. The case supposed was now impossible; but its supposition served to discover the intense affection of the bereaved father toward that wicked son, whose probation had closed under circumstances peculiarly aggravated. 2 Sam. xviii. 33. There is another case on sacred record, which, if we are to understand the passage according to its most natural import, is a still more striking illustration of the thing in question: I refer to the case of Paul, stated at the beginning of the ninth chapter of his epistle to the Romans; where he expresses his anxious concern for his brethren the Jews, in this emphatic manner: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Was it not right, that he should value the salvation of the whole nation more than his own? And was it not an amiable thing in him, to exercise such a benevolent regard to them as to be willing, (had this been consistent with the nature of the covenant of grace,) to give up his own interest in the Redeemer, which he prized infinitely above all other personal good, provided this could have been the means of their salvation? If this be a correct view of the text, (and I dare not criticise and explain away the force of a declaration, introduced with such unusual solemnity, and which seems designed to display the unselfish nature and strength of Christian benevolence, as it may exist in the heart of a saint on earth,) it proves that submission to future

punishment is not incompatible with unfeigned love to God, and the most sincere desire to please and enjoy him forever.\*

Though the Christian may do something towards determining his submission, by presenting to his mind evils which may never exist; yet the more common and more scriptural way to ascertain the genuineness and degree of his submission, is by attentively observing the frame of his mind under those evils by which it pleases God he should be *actually* tried. It could not have been as well ascertained beforehand, that Aaron had a submissive spirit, as when, under that sore bereavement, which is recorded in the tenth chapter of Leviticus, *he held his peace*. Eli gave great evidence of holy submission by saying, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good," at the very time when he was told of judgments, which were coming on his house, great enough to make both the ears of every one that heard them to tingle. The evils that were sent upon Job were purposely designed to manifest the goodness of his character; and his patience under them proved that his religion was not selfish. The afflictions, with which God visits his church in this world, are all designed to try and improve the character of its members. In some periods its afflictions have been peculiarly severe and trying. The people of God who live in the present day, are not required to determine their character, so much by presenting to their imagination the fiery trials of former periods, when bloody persecutions prevailed, as by examining the manner in which they endure the evils that are actually sent upon them. Nor is any individual required so much to decide on the genuineness of his submission, by endeavoring to imagine how he should bear the trials of another man, as by seeing how he bears his own. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive a crown of life." The temptation he *endures*, that is, bears in a right manner, is that which Providence brings upon him for the purpose of trying him. Now, though the trials of men are various, as to their degrees of severity, may we not conclude, that every man who endures his own, with a patient submissive spirit, will meet the divine approbation and receive the crown of life?

It was shown in the outset of this work, that all real religion was truth in doctrine, experience, or practice: and is not such a frame of heart, as that which has been described under this Article, the truth in experience? Is it not right that creatures who have departed from God, should return and become cordially reconciled to him? And ought they not to be reconciled to God, even if they are not convinced that it will result in their own salvation? Is it not reasonable that we should submit to God in every thing, since it is his right to govern, and he alone is qualified for the task? An unreconciled frame of heart can have no agreement with those moral axioms, called doctrines of truth. The holy scriptures are all in favor of the sweetest

\* The *superiority* of the apostle's disinterestedness has, I have no doubt, (if I may judge of the feelings of others by my own,) presented a much greater difficulty in the way of a literal interpretation of this passage, than any apprehension that such an interpretation would make him appear indifferent concerning, either his conformity to the moral image of Christ, or his enjoyment of his favor.



reconciliation, and the most unconditional submission. None can pretend that they say a word in favor of rebellious feelings in any creature in the universe. But the truth of this Article will appear to greater advantage while we proceed to compare it with the foregoing parts of our system.

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

The harmony between this and the two Articles of *experience*, which have been considered, is very apparent. How manifestly it accords with the one which immediately precedes it, for as soon as we have a heart to exercise complacency in holy characters, we must be prepared to submit to a holy God. But all that submission which goes before such complacency, is either a forced matter, or a deception; it is of no worth.

Submission is in harmony with *benevolence* as well as complacency. Selfishness is the very ground work of insubmission. While self is the ultimate end of action, it wants the reins of government in its own hands: but no sooner is this ultimate end relinquished, than the reins are cheerfully resigned into His hands whose right it is to rule.

The harmony between this branch of the experimental system and the *doctrines*, is also very apparent. Let us, with the spirit of reconciliation to God, go back and review that chain of doctrines which we have contemplated, and I trust it will prepare us to accede to them all. In the *first* we are presented with a God of unbounded greatness and holiness. To such a great, holy and good Being, we now submit. In the *second* we contemplate him as the Creator and Disposer of all things: and now, as his creatures, we bow down before him, acknowledging ourselves to be the work of his hands and pensioners on his bounty. We sensibly feel, that all we are, and all we possess, belong to him; that while petitioning is our privilege, it does not become us to dictate, or to say unto God, What doest thou? In the *third* we are led to view him as sustaining another important relation to us, viz. that of Moral Governor or Supreme King. Submission bows to his sceptre as both rightful and right. It contemplates him as being neither a usurper nor a despot. In view of the moral government of God, the subdued rebel is sincere in saying, Let it be eternal; let it be over me; let it be over all!

This Article of experimental religion is in harmony with the *fourth* of the doctrinal series. There we saw intelligent creatures, without any justifiable cause, revolting from the government of God; and here we see a part of them coming back, fully prepared to condemn that revolt, both in its commencement and continuance. In the *fifth* Article we see a glorious provision made to bring about the reconciliation of men to God, and in such a way that nothing is done to encourage future revolts. And the *present* Article shows us the contemplated reconciliation as actually effected: for every true convert submits to Him who is set King on the holy hill of Zion. Through a want of reconciliation to God, the free offer exhibited in the *sixth* Article, was, according to the *seventh*, obstinately rejected. But that renewing of the Holy

Ghost, described in the *eighth*, accounts for the wonderful phenomenon, that this once obstinate rebel is now lying submissively before the throne. Nor will a subdued rebel be disposed to object against the *ninth* Article, which represents his recovery from obstinate rebellion, to be wholly of grace—even sovereign grace: nor against the *tenth*, which supposes the Lord's choice of him as a vessel of mercy, was not built on his good works foreseen: nor against the *eleventh*, which represents his justification to be alike gracious with his election and effectual calling. True reconciliation must certainly rejoice to see its own continuance secured, according to the tenor of the *twelfth* Article. Reconciliation, when contrasted with rebellion, as it will be done by the resurrection of the just and the unjust, the decisions of the last day, and the rewards of the future state, according to the doctrine of the *thirteenth* Article, will appear most excellent and desirable. And those who are privileged with being on the right hand of the Judge, and with a place in his everlasting kingdom, will still have need of the grace of submission, to prevent their being rendered unhappy by witnessing the utter ruin and everlasting misery of so many of their fellow creatures; among whom there may be many of their dear relatives and friends.

Submission, in Christian experience, harmonizes with the *last* of the doctrinal Articles, viz. that which exhibits the counsel and agency of God as extending to all creatures and events. Towards this Article the carnal mind feels an uncommon degree of opposition; and yet to the renewed mind it is often the source of the sweetest comfort. If our hearts have been enlarged with universal good will, and we have become, in truth, reconciled to God, how can we but be pleased with a doctrine, which represents him as extending his counsels and agency to all the great and minute concerns of the universe? If our submission does not harmonize with a doctrine, which is so necessary to secure the most perfect display of divine glory, and the best good of the dependent universe, have we not reason to doubt whether it be the work of the Holy Spirit; whether it be based on that love which is without dissimulation?

#### REMARKS.

1. There is, perhaps, at the present period of the church, no one way in which sinners are more in danger of being deceived, than by a *false submission*. When one part of experimental religion is unsound, I know the other parts can none of them be sound. When therefore I speak of sinners, as more exposed to be deceived by false submission than by other false experiences, I mean to say, there is peculiar danger that the deception will *begin* here. They, whose religion commences under some alarming providence, are in more than common danger of yielding a forced submission. The psalmist says to God, "Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee." The margin reads *lie*, instead of submit. Ps. lxi. 3. There can be no doubt that many of God's enemies have, in view of the greatness of his power, rather than of the

holiness of his nature or the righteousness of his demands, submitted themselves to him ; that is, they have pretended to do it.

Let preaching be much in the strain of alarm, without a due proportion of doctrinal instruction ; and at the same time, let the obligation of submission be vehemently urged, without being accompanied with any clear exhibition of its holy and disinterested nature, and there is much reason to fear that a forced, instead of a cordial, submission, will be the result. The obligation to submit, and to submit immediately, can not be placed too high ; but if the submission inculcated, or that which we appear to be satisfied with, be devoid of holy love, which is the root of the whole matter, its being done *immediately* will not procure its acceptance with God who trieth the hearts.

2. We are led to remark, that in a world where so many adverse events are occurring, the grace of submission, or resignation to the divine will, is one for the exercise of which the Christian has very frequent occasion. And it is a grace which he can exercise no farther than he has confidence in God's plans and operations. To be truly resigned under afflictions, the Christian must believe that God has a plan ; and that it embraces all events, and is executed in the most perfect manner. Were he to adopt the sentiment, that God included in his plan some events, while others had no connection with it ; that some events could be traced up to His agency, while others took place, in which it had no concern ; where is there anything solid furnished by such a sentiment on which to build the grace of submission ? That man whom the scriptures exhibit as an eminent pattern of a patient, submissive spirit, entertained such sentiments of the all-controlling agency of the Most High, that he made no distinction between the evils which he suffered by the fire and the wind, and those which were inflicted by the hostile bands of the Sabeans and Chaldeans. Overlooking the instruments, he viewed his whole affliction and bereavement as coming from one and the same hand : "The Lord hath taken away." Such were manifestly the sentiments which led David to submit to injury and insult from the hand and tongue of Shimei : "Let him alone, let him curse ; for the Lord hath bidden him."

Submission to evil coming directly from wicked hands, is based on this firm belief ; that the counsel and agency of the great and holy God are to be as fully acknowledged, as if he did every thing by his own immediate operation, without employing instruments of any kind ; and that his counsel and agency are to be none the less acknowledged, when the instruments are such as have a design, than when they are incapable of it ; nor any less in case they are malicious, than when they are benevolent. Faith looks beyond the instruments, to that omnipotent Being, who makes and uses them all, according to his holy pleasure. Through *their folly* it looks up to *His wisdom*, and through *their wickedness* to *His holiness* ; resting satisfied that He is wise in all his counsels and holy in all his works. In view of this universal and entire control which the Almighty has over all instruments, our submission can be universal and entire. But so far as there is any doubt entertained concerning the truth of the doctrine, on which it rests for its support, submission itself must be imperfect.



If we do not believe that the Most High does his whole will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, by all kinds of instruments, unholy as well as holy, our *belief* does not lay a foundation broad enough, to build on it that universal and perfect submission which is required of us, and which it must be our happiness to exercise.

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## ARTICLE IV.

### REPENTANCE IS INDISPENSABLE TO THE RELIGION OF A PARDONED SINNER.

IN the religion of angels repentance has no place, for they have never sinned. Not only all their actions, but all the desires of their hearts have been perfectly conformed to the will of their Creator.— Since they can look back on no deviation from the most perfect rectitude, there is in their case no call for such an exercise as repentance. But in the religion of man, who is “a transgressor from the womb,” repentance must needs have a distinguished place. The word of God says much on this subject. It often describes the nature, fruits, and necessity of this grace of the Spirit. The Old Testament prophets inculcated repentance. The forerunner of Christ made this his prominent theme. Christ himself preached it much; and in this he was imitated by his apostles, whose ministry is thus described by one of the evangelists: “And they went out, and preached that men should repent.” Mark vi. 12. All the teachers whom God commissioned, under the former and latter dispensations, unite in urging men to repentance; also in declaring the impossibility of their being saved without it. The prophets taught that men must repent and turn from all their transgressions, else iniquity would be their ruin. Christ told his hearers, indiscriminately, that except they repented, they should all perish. The apostles made the same representation. They said, “Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” None of the inspired writers ever give us the least encouragement of forgiveness, except we repent. See Ez. xviii. 30. Luke xiii. 5. Acts iii. 19.

But all repentance is not of a saving nature; there is a kind which is spurious. The scripture therefore distinguishes that which is genuine by calling it “repentance unto life,” “repentance unto salvation,” and “repentance not to be repented of;” intimating that there is a repentance which is not unto life, not unto salvation, but which needeth to be repented of. It is my desire to be enabled, in this Article, to give a description of that repentance which has the promise of forgiveness and eternal life. Its most prominent features will be exhibited, which may serve to help us to distinguish it from all that is spurious.

1. Repentance is that *sorrow for sin which is of a godly sort*; or, in other words, of a disinterested character. The psalmist, in the exercise of true repentance, says, "I will declare my iniquity, I will be sorry for my sin." Even that repentance which is spurious is a sorrow which is occasioned by sin. The sins of Ahab and Judas were each the occasion of their repentance; but their sorrow for those sins was not of a godly sort. Their sorrow was altogether of a selfish nature. It was the sorrow of the world, that worketh death; "but godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of." Their repentance was of the same unholy nature with the sin they repented of; and therefore did itself call for repentance. But godly sorrow is a holy, disinterested thing; being of a nature perfectly different from the sin which it sorrows for. When Peter denied Christ, self-love ruled his heart; but when he repented of this sin, self-love was put down, and Christ was again enthroned.

This holy grief for sin is very properly denominated "*godly sorrow*," to intimate its conformity to *God*. Penitential sorrow naturally results from his image restored to the heart, and is in reality the same feeling towards sin which is exercised by God himself. He is said to abhor sinful men; and the subjects of repentance abhor themselves; and they do it in view of the same hateful character which draws forth the abhorrence of their Maker. This leads me to remark,

2. Repentance arises from a discovery of the *evil nature and destructive tendency* of sin. In the exercise of repentance, sin is seen to be that state of heart which is wrong, which is vile, and debasing. It is also seen that it leads to such conduct as is destructive of all good. The penitent discovers the *moral evil* there is in sin: he sees that it is a vile thing in its nature, and feels it to be so in application to himself. He sensibly feels what he utters, when he makes the confession, "*Behold I am vile*." He can form a conception of nothing so vile as sin; nothing else which could render him so hateful. Sin, he perceives, has one common nature; and that all sin is evil, wholly evil.

To the penitent it is clear, that sin has not only rendered creatures hateful, and made them hate one another, but that it has made them "*haters of God*." He is convinced, by what he has discovered within his own breast, that there is no being in the universe to which a wicked heart is so much opposed, as to the God of glory. He sees that he has been guilty of the heinous sin of *casting God behind his back*; of disregarding his authority, and despising his grace. To him it is now made evident, that it has always been the tendency of sin, to bring contempt upon the Most High, subvert his holy government, and turn the earth into a field of blood. In view of the exceeding great corruption of his heart, he is convinced, that had not merciful restraints been laid upon him, he should have done as abominable works as any other man, and been as noxious as a viper.

The vile nature and destructive tendency of sin being thus disclosed to the view of the penitent, he is prepared to come forward with a confession, honorable to the character of the Lawgiver, and say, "I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not." Job xxxiii. 27. Sin is now seen to be a *perversion* of that which is right—the transgression of a righteous law, and the pervers-

sion of those noble faculties by which our Creator rendered us capable of glorifying his great name. It is also seen to be *unprofitable* as it is perverse. Every creature, by sinning, intends to profit himself. This is the invariable object of all the transgressors in the universe. But whenever any one of them is brought to repentance, he is fully and feelingly convinced, that of all imaginable schemes to promote his own happiness, sinning against God is the most foolish; not merely because it exposes him to future punishment, but because the present good to be derived from a life of piety is altogether superior to the pleasures of sin. He now perceives sin served to disqualify him to enjoy himself and his friends; and that it utterly disqualified him to enjoy God, without whose favor there is nothing worthy to be called happiness. He feels most sensibly the appropriateness of the term *fool*, when applied to that man who is seeking and expecting happiness in the forbidden pursuits of sin. To him nothing is more evident than this; that if sin is the occasion of any good, it is not from any natural tendency it has to produce such a result. This will lead to observe,

3. True repentance is a sorrow for *all* sin. The repentance of God's ancient covenant people is thus foretold: "And ye shall lothe yourselves in your own sight, for *all* your evils that ye have committed." Ez. xx. 43. The broken hearted psalmist says, "I hate *every* false way." Ps. cxix. 128. Repentance supposes that sin is hated on account of its very nature; and we know that the nature of all sin is the same. Sin is, the whole of it, a transgression of the law; it is all of it in opposition to God; and therefore a heart, which is set right by renewing grace, will lothe it all. That repentance, which is altogether of a selfish character, will often be much affected with the commission of some particular sin, when there is no conviction of the evil of sin in general. Ahab humbled himself and walked softly in view of one sin, namely, his shedding the blood of Naboth; and Judas repented that he had betrayed Christ; but there is no reason to believe that either of them was affected with the multitude of other sins which he had committed.

The man, whose sorrow for sin is of a godly sort, is grieved for all his sin; for that which is open, and also for that which is secret. He hates *vain thoughts* as well as vicious actions. See Ps. cxix. 113. It was more particularly in view of the sin of his *heart*, the sin that dwelt in him, which fell under the cognizance of no eye except his own, and that which searches all hearts, that Paul exclaimed, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Some of our sins are directly against ourselves; some are against our families and relatives; some are against society at large; but all, either directly or indirectly, are against God. Now all these sins, without excepting any class, or any single transgression, as they pass in review before the contrite soul, are disapproved and lothed. Some of these sins may be despicable, and some honorable, but a penitent makes no distinction between them on this account. He condemns as heartily those which are highly esteemed among men, but which are abomination in the sight of God, as he does those which are disreputable with men. The penitent debauchee will be as much ashamed of



his amours as he would be of theft. And let the man of honor become an experimental Christian, he will as sincerely lothe and condemn himself, if peradventure he has ever killed a fellow man with the weapon of the duelist, as if he had done it with the murderer's club.

One thing which makes it evident, that it is the character of the saint to be sorry for all his sins, without excepting any of them, is this; he prays to have his secret and forgotten transgressions discovered to him. It is the sincere language of his soul, "Make me know my transgression and my sin." "Search me O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Job xiii. 23. Ps. cxxxix. 23. Such men as Job and David, yea, all men who have seen the evil of sin, desire to be more intimately acquainted with themselves as transgressors of God's law, that their repentance may become deeper and more universal.

4. It is another characteristic of that repentance which needeth not to be repented of, that it has *no excuse nor apology* to offer for sin. As soon as sin entered our world, there entered with it a sin-excusing spirit; and it is manifest that this spirit remains and prevails until the present time; but repentance counteracts and destroys it. The prodigal son, when brought to repentance, says, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." No excuse for sinning against heaven is pretended, nor so much as thought of. This is implied in the confession, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son." If the children of God ever pretend to have any excuse for sin, it is through a deficiency of grace. Let the spirit of repentance revive in their hearts, and it will put to silence their excuses. This was strikingly illustrated in the case of Job. When the work of divine grace was revived in his heart, he made this confession: "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further." Job xl. 4, 5.

Impenitent men are unwilling to forsake their sin; they therefore labor hard to find excuses for continuing in it: but it is far otherwise with the men who, by the Spirit of God, have been convinced of its evil and destructive nature. These most earnestly desire to be delivered from such a deadly evil; therefore they invent no excuses for its protection. Penitent sinners know that sin is a voluntary evil, that it exists in their own hearts, and forms their own character. They are therefore not disposed to throw the blame of it from themselves, by saying that it has descended to them from Adam; or that it is in accordance with the purposes of God; or that it will be the means of promoting his glory; or that they were under such a moral inability, that they could not render obedience to divine requirements. Their belief of all this furnishes them with no excuse—nothing to prevent deep humiliation before God, on account of their depraved nature and unholy conduct. They are now ashamed of that carnal mind, which was not subject to the law of God, neither indeed could be.

5. True repentance is attended with a full and frank *confession* of sin. The confession of sin is mentioned as a prerequisite to forgiveness, and therefore must be essential to the genuineness of our repent-

ance. "If we confess our sins," said an apostle, "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Job confessed his sins, and David did the same. Those who repented and were baptized by John, confessed their sins. The penitent thief made open confession of his sins, and Saul, the penitent persecutor, confessed his, and continued to do it as long as he lived. All such as have any godly sorrow, are disposed to make confession of their sins. If they have injured their fellow men, they are willing to confess to *them*, and also to make restitution for the wrongs they have done them, so far as it is in their power. But as they consider all their sins to be committed against God, they do not fail to confess them all to Him.

When at any time the child of God covers his sin and keeps silence, his bones wax old; but when he acknowledges his sin and does not hide his iniquity, freely confessing his transgression unto the Lord, he obtains the most sensible relief. See Ps. xxxii. As soon as repentance exists in the heart, it is immediately followed with confession, and it can not remain there without producing this fruit. Penitent men will, of course, be *praying* men. There can be no exception to this rule. Prayer is the necessary result of repentance. They who see their sins, as all penitents do, will find themselves impelled to the duty of prayer for the two-fold purpose, of confessing the sins they have committed, and of pleading for grace to prevent their repetition. See Ps. li. The penitent sinner could not live without a closet, where he might unbosom to his Father in secret, and confess all the hidden evils of his heart. He values other kinds of prayer, but without secret prayer he can not possibly live. He may perhaps be acquainted with many others, who can lead in the social prayer better than himself; but notwithstanding all the benefit he derives from their superior gifts, he feels that he must have a closet where he can confess his secret sins, and tell his own wants in his own way.

6. It is one characteristic of the repentance which is unto salvation, that it *reforms the life*. A reformation in the life, that is, in the external conduct, was what John the Baptist meant by the "fruits meet for repentance." If we *continue* in our sinful practices, we have not yet repented of them. It is he, and he alone, who confesseth and *forsaketh* his sins, that shall have mercy. Prov. xxviii. 13. And yet there is a promise of forgiveness to all who *repent* of their sins. These two things are reconcilable, because it is a fact, that all such as repent of their sins will forsake them. The command of God, addressed to the impenitent, is two-fold: "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin." Ez. xviii. 30. They who obey that part of the command which enjoins *repentance*, will also obey that part which requires them to *turn* themselves from all their transgressions—yes, from *all*; for as their repentance, if not spurious, extends to all their transgressions, so it will be with their reformation. What should we think of that man who has two prominent sins; for example, profane swearing and drunkenness; if he should say, "I think God has given me repentance for all my sins; and from the sin of profaning his name I am resolved immediately to break off." What estimate should we put on his repentance, when we perceived, by his actions, that his other sin he designed still to

retain? Would not every one draw the conclusion, in view of the fact, that his reformation was but partial; that godly sorrow for sin was not the thing that produced it?

Whatever we lothe, we naturally forsake. They who are the subjects of godly sorrow, lothe their sins, and will therefore forsake them. "What fruit had ye," said the apostle to the saints at Rome, "in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" Rom. vi. 21. They who are renewed unto repentance, love God: they are now displeased with themselves, because by their sins they have displeased and dishonored Him; and they are well aware, that a repetition of their sins will again grieve his Holy Spirit, and bring reproach on his holy name. They are sensible that it has been the tendency of their sins, to make them a curse, and not a blessing, to their fellow men; but now, as they care for the souls of those around them, they feel constrained, by a savory discourse and exemplary conduct, to promote their moral improvement. They also know that sin has separated between them and God, and has provoked him to hide his face from them: and can they be willing to provoke him, by renewed transgressions, to withdraw his gracious presence, and leave them in darkness? When the Lord speaks peace unto his people and to his saints, he adds this caution: "But let them not return again to folly." To this caution every contrite soul responds, "Amen, let me not return to folly. *O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!*" Ps. lxxxv. 8; cxix. 5.

7. Repentance is a *humble* exercise, devoid of *self-sufficiency* and *self-righteousness*. It feels its dependence on divine grace both for its *existence* and *acceptance*. Repentance and humility are sometimes so intimately connected, in the word of God, as hardly to be distinguished from each other. See Isa. lvii. 15; lxvi. 2. We know that when rebels are subdued and brought under the yoke of Christ, they are made *willing subjects*, and are now sincerely and heartily ashamed of their former rebellion. Their repentance is their own voluntary exercise. It could not be more so, were they as independent in their volitions as the all-sufficient God himself. Yet, though it is their own voluntary exercise, it is *given* them from above: for Christ is exalted to give repentance, as well as the forgiveness of sins. Acts v. 31. When the gentiles first received the word of God, they who were the true seed of Abraham gave Him the glory, saying, "Then hath God also to the gentiles granted repentance unto life." Acts xi. 18. And when Paul exhorts Timothy to instruct opposers in meekness, he adds for his encouragement, "If God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." 2 Tim. ii. 25. It is no less true now than it was then, that wherever repentance is exercised, it is God who grants or gives it. This is known and acknowledged by all those to whom this precious gift is granted. "He called me by his grace," says one; another says, "Surely *after I was turned* I repented; and *after that I was instructed*, I smote upon my thigh." Gal. i. 15. Jer. xxxi. 19.

Every repenting sinner is convinced that once he sinned and repented not; and that in his flesh, his unregeneracy, there was no good thing. Nor is his conviction any less clear, that for those different and juster views of the evil of sin which he now entertains, he is entirely indebted



to the grace of God. And his sense of dependence on God, both to originate and continue his penitential exercises, is rendered more vivid by the growing influence of the grace of repentance over the powers of his sinful soul. With his dependence in view, his deviations from the path of duty are followed with such petitions as these: "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned." "Create in me a clean heart—uphold me by thy free Spirit." Jer. xxxi. 18. Ps. li. 10, 12.\*

\* It was some years ago, when these thoughts on the humble nature of repentance were committed to paper. At that time, I supposed I was expressing the sentiments, not only of the scriptures, but also of all that part of the church, which has been denominated the Orthodox, in distinction from such as adopt the Pelagian or Arminian systems. But more recently I have found some of those whose church articles still remain strictly Calvinistic, are beginning to exhibit entirely different views of this subject.

In a particular sermon that I heard myself, which was designed to enforce the obligation to repentance, the preacher introduced an impenitent man, as excusing himself from the duty enjoined, on the plea, that the agency of God was necessary to produce repentance. Had he told the self-excusing rebel, that repentance was the creature's own exercise, and every sinner's incumbent duty, and that his need of divine grace, to counteract his impenitent feelings and transform his heart, did not release him from obligation to an immediate compliance, I should have been gratified. But I was grieved to find, that the way he took to stop the mouth of the cavalier, was to deny, in effect, that God was the giver of repentance. He told him that those texts of scripture which speak of God's giving men repentance, meant no more than his giving them a dispensation, opportunity, or means of repentance. He then proceeded to introduce three texts of this class, viz. Acts v. 3, xi. 18; and 2 Tim. ii. 25; which are the same that I have made use of to prove repentance to be a dependent exercise, for which we are indebted to the grace of God. Each of these texts he so explained, as to keep out of sight the need of any special divine operation on the sinner's heart, in order to his becoming a penitent. After hearing these texts thus explained, I felt an inclination to ask the preacher, what reason could be assigned, why the word *peradventure* was inserted in the last text: "If God *peradventure* will give them repentance." Was there a doubt (thought I) whether these men would have a dispensation or opportunity of repentance given them, when means to bring them to its exercise were already being used?

I will here take the liberty to place before the reader the views entertained by Mr. Henry, on two of these texts. On Acts v. 31, he remarks, "Repentance and remission go together; wherever repentance is wrought, remission is without fail granted. Christ is appointed to give repentance by his Spirit working with the word, to awaken the conscience, to work contrition for sin, and an effectual change in the heart and life. The new heart is his work, and the broken spirit a sacrifice of his providing: and when he has given repentance, if he should not give remission, he would forsake the work of his own hands." On Acts xi. 18, he is, if possible, still more explicit. "He hath granted them not only the means of repentance, in opening a door of entrance for his ministers among them, but the grace of repentance, in having given them his Holy Spirit, who, whenever he comes to be a Comforter, first convinces and gives a sight of sin, and sorrow for it, and then a sight of Christ and joy in him. Repentance is God's gift; it is not only his free grace that accepts it, but his mighty grace that works it in us; that takes away the heart of stone, and gives us a heart of flesh. The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit; it is he that provides himself that lamb."

What, I would now ask, can be the use of adopting the method of the preacher referred to, for the purpose of silencing the objections that are raised against an obligation to repent, because repentance is God's gift; unless it be intended to silence all other objections of this kind in the same way, by passing through the Bible, and explaining all those passages, which speak of God's operations on the hearts of men, to mean nothing more than his giving them a probation and leaving them to take care of themselves? If God gives *repentance* in no other sense, only to grant the opportunity and means of repenting, then, no doubt, the same must be true concerning *faith*, *love*, the *spirit of prayer*, and all other holy affections. If no divine influence be exerted upon our hearts, to cause us to *repent*, there is no reason to believe that any such influence is exerted to produce *any other part* of the Christian character. When, therefore, God is represented as preparing the hearts of his people to pray, it must be understood to imply no more than his giving them an opportunity to pray, or to prepare their own hearts for the duty. When he says to such as lie in the ruins of the fall, "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you," it must mean merely this: that he will give them a chance to get a new heart and a new spirit for themselves. The apostle said to the Ephesian saints, "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins."

Repentance gives God the glory for its *acceptance*, no less than for its existence in the heart. It is not a self-righteous exercise; it does not claim for itself any merit, as though it had cancelled the debt incurred by transgressing the law, but it prompts the man in whose heart it is, to hasten to the throne of grace with this humble petition, "God be *merciful* to me a sinner." Such a man, however, will not say, there is nothing lovely in a penitential frame of spirit; nor that he, as the subject of it, is destitute of amiableness: for he knows that the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, dwells not only in the high and holy place, but with him also that is of a humble and contrite spirit. Isa. lvii. 15. But while he knows that contrition constitutes a trait of character, which must appear lovely in the eyes of God and of all holy beings, he can not feel that the change which has taken place in him, has destroyed or diminished his desert of punishment. On the contrary, the more his contrition for sin is increased, the more entirely does he renounce his own righteousness, and plead for mercy through the righteousness of his Redeemer.

8. True repentance, where it takes place, *remains*, and continues to form an important part of the character of the Christian. There are some whose repentance resembles a land flood, which, after the rain is over, soon dries up; while the repentance of others resembles a fountain or a river whose waters fail not. In the beatitudes pronounced by Christ, in his sermon on the mount, we hear him say, "Blessed are the poor in spirit—Blessed are they that mourn." By this he designs to teach us that the men of grace are *habitually* poor in spirit, and are daily mourning over their sins. They have mourned, do mourn, and will mourn, as long as they live. When the Lord says, in the last chapter of Isaiah, "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word," it evidently teaches us that the things implied in poverty, contrition, and trembling at his word, constitute the established and permanent character of the man of piety. The same view is given of the

This, according to the method of interpretation which has been adopted, meant that God had suffered them to quicken themselves. And when God is said to work in his children both to will and to do, it must import that he has given them, along with other powers, the faculty of willing, which is a faculty incapable of being operated upon by any agent beside themselves, whether human or divine.

What Christian would not be grieved, to have all those texts, which speak of the help, to be derived from the Spirit of God, in restoring the divine image to our depraved hearts, explained in this manner? Would not every one exclaim, If this be all the help that we are authorized to expect, who then can be saved?

But why, it may be asked, is all this violence done to the oracles of God? Why are those precious texts, which speak so plainly of a powerful divine operation on the human mind, to originate, preserve and perfect a holy character, expounded in a manner so novel and unnatural? The ostensible reason is, to prevent men from neglecting their own souls; as if they could not be excited to attempt anything, for the accomplishment of which *divine assistance* is supposed to be requisite. Must we then be made to disbelieve, or, at least, forget our dependence on God, before we can be excited to make an effort? Has it been discovered, that what Solomon represented to be an index of folly, is in reality a proof of wisdom, namely, that a man should trust his own heart, his own sufficiency? Is it true, I would seriously ask, is it true, that their dependence on divine influence to cause repentance, is the reason why sinners remain impenitent and neglectful of the great salvation? Sinners who are living carelessly, have very little belief of their dependence on God for the salvation of their souls. When their dependence is made real to their minds, it is far from proving to be an opiate to lull them to sleep.

pious man in the thirty-fourth Psalm : "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart ; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." They who become broken hearted and contrite, remain so. This is their character through life. The same cause which brings them into the dust of humiliation, keeps them there. "My sin is *ever before me*," said one who knew what it was to mourn for it. Penitent characters do not lose sight of their sinful ways, and they are daily increasing their acquaintance with the evil of their hearts. The divine commandment, by the coming of which their sin first revived, continues to come, and to produce the same effect. The Spirit of God, which first reproved them of sin, abides with them, and continues to reprove them more and more.

Christians not only retain their penitent character unto the end of life, but as they grow in grace they become more deeply affected with the evil of their sin. And why should they not ? The more their hearts are freed from the blinding influence of sin, the better prepared they must be to discover its deformity. And it is certain that their obligation to the exercise of higher degrees of repentance is always augmenting, by reason of the sins which they daily commit. The sins of which they have already repented, are not rendered any less ill-deserving on this account, and therefore the circumstance, that they have once repented of their sins, does not do away, or even diminish their obligation to repent in time to come. Paul never lost sight of the vileness of his conduct as a persecutor of the church of Christ so long as he lived, though he had mourned over it and confessed it many a time. If it was right for him to feel an abhorrence of this wicked conduct, when his eyes were first opened, it must have been right for him to feel it until his dying day ; and it must be right for him to feel it *now*. The holiness of heaven will prevent the saints from making any new work for repentance ; but it will have no tendency to keep them from loathing and condemning themselves, in view of the sins which they committed on the earth. Nor will the continuance of repentance diminish the happiness of that perfect state. When they give praise to Him that loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, their blessedness will be greatly augmented by the clear views they will then have of the vileness of those sins.

This work was begun by showing that there is truth in religion ; that every part of true religion is supported by the whole inspired volume, so that all which is said about it is said in its favor, and nothing against it ; and that every branch of true religion has a harmonious agreement with the whole. This agreement is, I think, very apparent in relation to evangelical repentance.

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

*First.* It is in harmony with the preceding Articles of *experience*.

Repentance has been described as differing essentially from that sin for which it sorrows ; and therefore it must be disinterested : for if it were a selfish exercise it would be of the same nature with all the sin there is in earth and hell. When repentance is described as a sorrow



for sin which is not selfish, it entirely coalesces with our *first* Article of experience. It is the natural fruit of all that love which is disinterested, whether it be exercised towards God, our fellow men, or ourselves. When we exercise pure love towards all these objects, we shall be unfeignedly sorry for all the injury we have done, or thought to do them. And the more we have of the free love described in *that* Article, the more we shall have of the repentance which is described in *this*.

Nor is the agreement less apparent between this and the *second* Article. In that Article we saw that it was the nature of holiness in ourselves, to be delighted with holiness in others, and to be equally disgusted with sin. But would it be consistent to make holiness of character, the ground of exercising the love of complacency towards others, and at the same time have complacency in ourselves considered as sinners? If our religion be disinterested, we shall be delighted with our character no farther than it is conformed to the divine image; and so far as we discover it to be repugnant to this, we shall abhor it. In the same degree as we are delighted with God, angels, and saints, on account of their holiness, we shall be displeased with all wicked creatures, and with all wickedness, not excepting that which we see in ourselves.

This Article has an intimate connection and a perfect agreement with the one which immediately precedes it. There we viewed the rebel submitting himself and becoming reconciled to God; and here we see him mourning over his past rebellion. And certainly if that reconciliation was real and sincere, we should expect to see him going about with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, all the residue of his life, deeply humbled at the thought that he was once in arms against his Maker; and we should expect to see him grieved on account of his remaining disaffection to his holy government.

*Secondly.* This Article is harmonious with our *doctrinal* series.

The repentance which has been described is in harmony with the *first* of those Articles. The man whose heart is penitent, if he has been an atheist before, is now prepared to acknowledge the existence, infinite greatness and holiness of God. In confessing his sin, he says to God, "It was the alienation of my heart from thee, which led me to deny thy existence and thy providence. Now I am convinced of the truth of both; and am convinced that it is against thee, thee only, that I have sinned; and that I have done all this evil in thy sight."

Penitential feelings are in accordance with the doctrine of the *second* Article, in which the eternal God is presented to our view, as giving existence to a wise and benevolent system of creation and providence, for the display of his own glory. That man who has, through grace, come to himself, accounts it a privilege to be an intelligent creature, and not a brute, because he finds himself capable of beholding the glory of God manifested in his works of creation and providence. He is now ashamed and confounded, that he has been so brutish, as to be blind to this glorious display of divine wisdom, power, and benevolence.

This Article most sweetly harmonizes with the *third* of that series, namely, that which relates to the law of God, given to regulate the

conduct of all the subjects of his moral government. The law, like its Author, is perfect. *Sin is the transgression of the law*, and therefore a most vile and destructive thing. And what is repentance but a sincere and hearty condemnation of sin? Repentance wholly takes the side of the law against sinful self; confessing, "The law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin." The penalty is annexed to the law to give it strength, and is essential to its very existence; repentance therefore leads us to justify the whole law, penalty as well as precept, and to accept the punishment of our iniquity. Lev. xxvi. 41. The language of the penitent is, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." Mic. vii. 9.

We could not have seen repentance for sin to be in harmony with the *third* Article, without perceiving at the same time its agreement with the *fourth*, namely, the apostacy of man. Every child of Adam, who is brought to repentance, most heartily condemns the conduct of his first father and federal head, in his failure of fulfilling the condition of the covenant of works: and in his intercourse with the Holy One it will be natural for him sometimes to express the sense he has of the dreadfulness of that sin which brought death into the world and all its woes. But I see nothing in the scriptures which would lead us to conclude that the penitent is required to confess this sin as his own, with a conviction of personal criminality, any more than the sin of his immediate progenitors, or indeed the sin of any other man. It is for his personal transgressions alone that he can feel guilty.\* These extend back to the commencement of his existence as a moral agent, whether his memory can reach back so far or not. For all his personal sins he feels guilty; and none the less so, because that by the disobedience of his first father he was made a sinner. And this is a sentiment which he does, by no means, discard from his creed. Rom. v. 12, 19. In connection with the fall of man, we were led to contemplate man in his fallen state as a creature *entirely depraved*. With this view of entire depravity, the feelings of every broken-hearted sinner fully accord: "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." Rom. vii. 18. There is no reason to believe that *he* has repented at all, who has not seen himself to be an entirely depraved creature.

Penitential feelings remarkably coalesce with the doctrine of *atonement*, which is the subject of the *fifth* Article. To condemn sin and put an indelible stigma upon it, was a capital object of the death of the Son of God. The apostle informs us, that God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, *to condemn sin in the flesh*. Rom. viii. 2. This was to do just what repentance leads all those who are made the subjects of it, most freely to do; they all condemn sin; and the more they repent, the more do they condemn it. Let them now turn their eyes to the cross of Christ, and see how sin is condemned there. Must they not discern ineffable glory in that atonement which so emphatically condemns sin?

I shall pass over all the other doctrinal Articles, except the *last*,

\* God abhors all sin, but feels guilty of none: the penitent abhors all sin, and feels guilty of his own.

namely, that which relates to the decrees and agency of God. Under this Article it was shown, that the only wise God has a most perfect plan, comprehending all existences and all events, which, without the least failure, he will carry into execution. "How, then," it may be said, "can I be sorry for anything which has taken place, without its implying a dissatisfaction with the plan and providence of God? How can I believe God's plan to be absolutely perfect, and yet be sorry that a particular part of it ever went into operation? And does it not imply a disapprobation of God's plan, for me to be sorry that I have sinned?"

This seeming want of harmony between the exercise of repentance, and the doctrine of a perfect divine plan, comprehending all events, even those sinful acts which we deplore, is owing to some mistaken views concerning what is implied in repenting and sorrowing for sin. Is it necessary to suppose, that sorrow for sin, even that which is of a godly sort, implies a wish that the sin sorrowed for had never existed? It is evident, that such a wish as this made no part of the repentance, which Joseph inculcated on his brethren; who being moved by envy had sold him into Egypt? "Now therefore," said he, "be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life." Gen. xlv. 5. What could this mean? It certainly could not mean that he would not have them repent, and that deeply; for with a view to bring them to such a state of mind, he had with much difficulty concealed from them those strong emotions of fraternal affection which were impatient of restraint. It could mean nothing less than this; that while he would have them abhor themselves, he would at the same time lead them to view the good hand of God, which had been engaged in bringing to pass that grand event, of which their wickedness had been the instrumental cause. He would have them see a divine counsel and agency concerned in this whole affair, that they might entertain exalted conceptions of God's wisdom, directing their folly; and of God's righteousness, making a holy use of their wickedness.

Sin renders the being who commits it vile and ill-deserving. There is nothing in it to love and approve; but every thing to hate and detest. The *tendency* of sin is as evil as its *nature*. It tends to dishonor the Creator, and destroy the order, peace, and happiness of the created system. But though its natural tendency is evil, and only evil, still it is overruled to further the designs of infinite benevolence. "But I would ye should understand, brethren," said Paul the prisoner, "that the things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." Phil. i. 12. It is through the marvellous interposition of the all-sufficient God, that good should ever be promoted by a thing which is so vile and mischievous as sin.

The penitent man may have a full belief, that all the sin which has been committed, and his own among the rest, will be overruled for the promotion of greater good; and yet be filled with godly sorrow for it. Godly sorrow does not require that we should be dissatisfied with anything God has done, or that we should wish a single event which has transpired, were stricken from the list of events. All it requires of us is, that we feel the same disapprobation of sin which God does. It is



the abominable thing which he hates, and which we ought to hate. God says to every transgressor of his law, *Thou art vile.* The penitent answers, "Behold *I am vile.*" God says, I abhor *thee.* To this he answers, "I abhor *myself.*" God tells him that he deserves no good at his hands. He readily responds, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son." God proceeds to tell him that he deserves the damnation of hell. He replies, "I accept the punishment of my sins. —Thou art clear when thou judgest."

"And if my soul were sent to hell,  
Thy righteous law approves it well."

Now is not this the repentance which needeth not to be repented of? And yet it does not necessarily suppose the least dissatisfaction with those divine decrees which embrace the whole system of events. In the exercise of the deepest repentance he may say, "I believe that all my sinful deeds were what God's hand and counsel determined before to be done; I acquiesce in His determination, while I abhor myself—God appears holy, while I am vile—I meant it for evil, while He meant it for good."

Some may still think that the view which has now been given of repentance, takes from it what is essential to its holy nature. But let me ask such, Do you not entirely disapprove of all the sin of Joseph's brethren in selling him into Egypt? Still you do not intend to say that you wish this thing had never taken place; for such a wish would be rebellion against God, who sent him there to save much people alive. You profess to abhor the wickedness of the Jews in putting to death the Savior: but do you wish he had never been crucified? Where then would have been the glory which was to follow? Where, in such a case, would that great multitude of redeemed men, which no man can number, have spent their eternity? Perhaps you will say, that you do not wish these *events* were struck out of existence, but only the sins which produced them. But you ought to remember, that the events could not have come into being without their causes. God determined that Joseph should be sold into Egypt by means of the *envy* of his brethren; and that Christ should be crucified by *wicked hands.* The sins which gave existence to these wicked actions are themselves to be considered as events, and were as much included in the wise plan of God as any other events.

If you can abhor the conduct of Joseph's brethren, and of the crucifiers of the Savior, without wishing that Joseph had not been sold, and that Christ had not been crucified, why can you not condemn and abhor your own sins, without wishing that those sins had never existed? It is just as certain that *your* sins were included in God's decrees, as that such was the case with theirs. And it is no less certain that God will overrule your sins for the promotion of his glory, than that he has overruled their sins to promote this object: for saith the scripture, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." Ps. lxxvi. 10.

Does the repentance which God exercises, imply a wish that he had laid his plan differently? When it is said, "It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart," can it design to tell us that the all-wise Creator now wished that he

had made no such creature as man? His repentance in this case must have implied a change of feelings towards man, in view of his having become a depraved, unlovely creature; but it could not imply a wish that he had not given him existence; nor a wish that he had given such a different arrangement to things as should have prevented his defection; since this defection was that which made way for the introduction of the glorious scheme of redemption, the chief of all the works of God. Let our Creator be our pattern; and from Him let us learn the nature of repentance. As He abhors all the wrath of man, and the wrath of devils, which he makes use of to promote his glory, without wishing his plan had been altered in a single particular; so let us abhor all the sin in the universe; and let us not only abhor, but feel guilty and ashamed of our own; and yet be perfectly reconciled to that scheme of providence which includes it all. Let us rest satisfied, that in the hands of a Being, whose attributes are all infinite, this evil and bitter thing will be made to further that holy cause which it seeks to destroy.

Before I drop this subject, I would seriously ask, whether there can be any satisfactory evidence of disinterested repentance, where there is no submission to the will of God in relation to the existence of those very evils of which we repent? Could Christ's crucifiers have had evidence that their sorrow for this sin was of a godly sort, while they felt entirely unreconciled to the determinate and holy counsel of God concerning his crucifixion? Is not this one of those things which constitute the essential difference, which is found to exist between that repentance which is the fruit of the Spirit, and that which is of a selfish character? May we not suppose that this was one thing which made a difference between the repentance of Peter and of Judas? While Peter abhorred the evil of his conduct in denying his Master, ought we not to suppose that he was reconciled to the holy will of God in determining to make use of this very thing, as the means of illustrating his great grace in recovering him from his dreadful fall, and making use of it to render him more humble through all his subsequent life; and probably through his whole existence? But how was it with the repentance of Judas? While he had no abhorrence of the *sinfulness* of his conduct, he, no doubt, wished the deed which he had perpetrated could have been struck out of existence. And wherefore? Merely because it had proved ruinous to himself. And will not all the reprobates in hell forever possess the same kind of repentance? Will they not always, without *hating sin*, wish they had not sinned? On the other hand, will not all the redeemed in glory forever hate sin, without wishing they had not sinned? While they perfectly disapprove of their own conduct in sinning against God, will they not as perfectly approve of His conduct in suffering them to do so?

REMARKS.

1. With this Article of the experimental system before us, we discover one trait which makes an essential difference in the characters of men. The difference is not made by this; that one part of man-

kind have invariably yielded obedience to the law, while the other part have transgressed it. The law has been transgressed by the whole race: "for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Nor is this the difference; that some have now become sinless, while others remain sinful. "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" "In many things we all offend." "There is not a just man upon the earth, that doth good and sinneth not." But the great thing which distinguishes the just from the unjust, is the feeling they have towards the unlovely traits of their own character. They know there is much in them that is hateful, and they actually hate it. In view of their own sins they lothe themselves, and pray for complete deliverance; and still a body of death hangs upon them. While this conflict is going on in the breasts of God's children, their fellow men sin on and repent not. They justify or excuse their transgressions. Or if, at any time, their consciences take the side of the law, still they exercise no true repentance. To such an affection as godly sorrow they are strangers.

Surely the difference between the characters of men, which is made by penitence and impenitence, is not of small consideration. It is great enough to lay a foundation for that discrimination, which God makes between men in this and the future world. With penitent sinners God now holds communion; but with the impenitent, however moral they may be, he has none. As the penitent sorrow after a godly sort, exercising the same holy abhorrence which God himself does, he embraces them in his arms, lifts on them the light of his countenance, and hears their prayers. But since the impenitent have no such contrite feelings in view of their transgressions, he can have no fellowship with them. He knows them afar off. In the judgment of the great day, when he will divide one part of mankind from the other, the line of separation will not be drawn between great and small offenders; but between those who repented and those who repented not. Some of the chief of sinners will be on the right hand of the Judge, and some of the least on the left: but on the right hand there will be no impenitent sinner; nor will one that repented be found on the left.

2. This part of Christian experience sheds light on the doctrinal system; particularly as it relates to the inexcusableness of our impenitent state, and our indebtedness to special divine grace for our deliverance from it. Every man who truly repents, is brought to see and feel that his whole impenitent life was sinful. He sincerely condemns himself, not for his overt acts of transgression alone, but also for the evils of his heart. He blames himself that he was not repenting at the very time he was holding fast deceit and refusing to return. Now if it be right for him to blame himself for his impenitence, (and were it not right, repentance itself would be wrong,) his impenitence was wicked and inexcusable while it remained, even at the very time when he was shielding himself with excuses. If his being born in sin, and thereby rendered morally incapable of exercising repentance, without the aid of the Spirit, had furnished any real excuse for his impenitency while it remained, then he could feel no guilt on account of it after its removal. A man who is recovered from an involuntary disease, does not feel guilty that he did not work, when he had not



power to rise from his bed. If the sinner were not actually guilty for his impenitent heart, as well as life, the Holy Ghost, who is the Spirit of truth, would not cause him to feel that self-condemnation which he now does. As the humble and contrite man is perfectly satisfied, that the self-condemnation he now feels is a frame of heart which accords with truth, he entertains no doubt concerning the inexcusableness of his impenitent state. His feelings are so distinct and decided, as to settle his mind, and prepare him to withstand the sophistry of those who had rather argue against their obligation to exercise repentance, than actually to repent.

Some may think, that the penitent's conviction of his former criminality arises from the discovery he has made, that he did not need the special aid of the divine Spirit to produce contrition; and that he was, in every sense of the word, *able to do it of himself*. But this is far from being the true reason: for never before did he have so clear a discovery of his dependence on God for a penitent heart. Now he feels the force of those words which he finds in the prophet: "Surely after I was turned, I repented." At the same time that he confesses his great guilt for not repenting long before he did, he is deeply convinced he should not have repented so soon, nor at all, had it not been for the interposition of divine grace. He now sees that this grace was needed, not to confer a new faculty, or anything else like an increase of corporeal or intellectual strength, but to counteract sin, and make him willing to comply with a most reasonable requisition.

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## ARTICLE V.

FAITH, ESPECIALLY THAT WHICH HAS CHRIST FOR ITS OBJECT, FORMS A PROMINENT FEATURE IN THE EXPERIENCE OF A CHRISTIAN.

FAITH is sometimes put for the thing believed. In this sense is the word used by the apostle Jude, when he exhorts those to whom he wrote, to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. When thus used, it does not belong to the experimental system. It is only as an exercise of the *heart* that it comes under this head.

Infidels deny any obligation to the exercise of faith. They think the command which enjoins it is altogether unreasonable; as much so as if they were required to erect a superstructure where there was no foundation on which it could rest. They ought, however, to know, that when the scriptures oppose faith to reason, it is not reason itself to which they oppose it, but that which is falsely so called. Reason, unswayed by a wicked heart, would never declare against the being

of a God: "for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead." Nor would it ever declare against the religion of the scriptures. Were it suffered to give in its own unbiassed testimony, such testimony would always be in favor of the inspiration of these writings, and the truth of those doctrines which they reveal. When, therefore, faith is defined (Heb. xi. 1,) as being *the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*, we are not to understand that it is the province of this grace to give either *existence* or *evidence* to the things believed. The things exist independently of our faith; and so it is with the evidence of their existence. But since things belonging to another world are out of the reach of our senses, and are such things as do not suit the taste of carnal minds, they are generally treated as they would be if they had no real existence. The things which are seen and temporal, we treat as realities; but the things which are unseen and eternal, though they are the most substantial realities, we treat as fictions. With the evidence we have before us, nothing would be wanting to convince us of their existence, could reason for once be rescued from the tyranny of a proud, rebellious heart. By such a revolution in the mind, the things of eternity—things relating to the government of Jehovah and the redemption of men—become interesting, and there is a moral preparation to attend to the evidence of their existence. The *spirit of faith* brings before the mind these future things, so that they appear present, and these unseen things, so as to render them visible; hence it is, that faith is called the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. That, which faith makes a substance to the mind of the believer, was always a substance; but to him it had been rendered unsubstantial by an evil heart of unbelief.

There is nothing unreasonable in that declaration of the apostle, "He that believeth on the Son of God *hath the witness in himself*." The excellent nature and transforming influence of the change, which the believer has experienced, by the instrumentality of the gospel, affords conviction to his own mind that the gospel is true. Besides, it is the natural effect of this moral change, to open his eyes upon all the external and internal evidence of the truth of this divine system; and it needs only to be seen as it is, to be most surely believed.—Luke i. 1.

Faith holds a very conspicuous place among the graces of the Spirit. It furnishes one of the distinctive names of the followers of the Lamb. They are distinguished by being called *believers*, and the *faithful*; and by its being said of them, that they are *in the faith*. Their warfare is called *the fight of faith*; their most important weapon of defense is termed *the shield of faith*; their effectual fervent prayer, that availeth much, is *the prayer of faith*; and the victory that overcometh the world is their faith. By faith they pass from a state of condemnation to a state of justification. By faith they *stand*—they *walk*—they *live*.

Abraham is every where in the scriptures honored as a distinguished saint; and his *faith* was the thing which signalized him, and gave him such an elevation in the church of God, as to be called the father

of all them that believe. Faith supported him in his severest trials, and enabled him to give glory to God. All that list of Old Testament worthies, who, in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, are held up for our admiration and example, are distinguished by their faith. The first Christian martyr is spoken of as eminent, and his eminence is all summed up in his faith: "And they chose Stephen, a man *full of faith* and of the Holy Ghost." This also constituted the eminence of Barnabas, that son of consolation. "He was a good man," says the sacred historian, "and *full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.*" There was nothing which Christ more frequently reprov'd in his disciples, than their unbelief and the weakness of their faith.

A grace so excellent as faith, and one which holds so distinguished a rank in the experimental system, it might be expected would not fail to be counterfeited by that subtle spirit, who, when the occasion suits, is transformed into an angel of light. And if we mistake not, he has some peculiar advantages to deceive, in relation to this branch of religious experience; particularly because there are several other kinds of faith, besides that by which we are justified. Now the greater number of resemblances any thing has, whether it be a bank note, or a grace of the Spirit, the more liable are we to mistake the counterfeit for the reality. There is indeed a *true* and a *false*, in relation to every article in Christian experience. As to repentance, there is a true, godly sorrow, and there is a selfish, legal sorrow: yet as there is only one kind of true repentance, so I do not know of but one kind that is false. But in relation to faith, the case is somewhat different, for while the scriptures tell us of but one kind of faith which will save the soul, they speak of several kinds which are not of a saving nature. These may all be comprised under three heads: 1. Speculative or historical faith. 2. The faith of miracles. 3. Presumptive faith, namely, such as is exercised by the false convert.

I will not say that all these three kinds of faith are *false*; for this is hardly a proper epithet to apply to speculative faith, when it credits what is true; or to the miracle-working faith, when it proves sufficient to produce the expected miracle. But should either speculative, or miracle-working faith, claim to be considered a saving grace, its claim would be unfounded. In relation to justification, these two kinds, as well as the faith of presumption, may with propriety be termed *false*. It must therefore be greatly for the interest of the grand deceiver, to have all these three kinds of faith esteemed as possessing the character of that, to which is annexed the promise of salvation. And it must greatly concern those who would counteract his destructive wiles, to make those discriminations which will serve to show wherein saving faith differs from them all.

1. *Speculative* faith is essentially different. There are several material points in which it differs from that faith which saves the soul.

First. It is merely an act of the *intellect*, and not an exercise of the heart. Men may speculatively believe what they perfectly hate. The apostle James has given us the most striking illustration of this kind of faith which he possibly could, when he says, "Thou believest there is one God, thou doest well; the devils also believe, and tremble."



He meant to tell us, that the devils believe in the divine existence, even in the existence of the one only living and true God ; and that they give striking proof that their faith is real, in that they tremble before him. It is moreover evident, that he intended by this illustration, to teach the children of men, that they might have the same kind of faith in God, and also in Christ, and yet never be saved. There are very many, no doubt, within, as well as without the pale of the church, whose belief in Christ is precisely of the same character with the faith of devils. They are convinced by arguments, which they can not gainsay nor resist, that he is a teacher come from God, and that his religion is divine ; while they are in full possession of the carnal mind which is enmity against God. But the faith, which brings the sinner into the ark of safety, is described as an exercise of the *heart*. Philip would not baptize the Ethiopian eunuch, unless he believed in Christ with *all his heart*. And the apostle tells us that it is with the *heart*, man believeth unto righteousness. Acts viii. 37. Rom. x. 10.

Secondly. Speculative faith, even when it has God and divine truth for its object, does not require any other soil for its production than the natural heart ; but the faith which saves the soul, is the product of a different soil. It never springs up nor grows except in a regenerated heart. It is one of the fruits of the Spirit. See Gal. v. 22. This faith is said to be of the operation of God, and to be given of God. Col. ii. 12. Phil. i. 29. It rises and falls with the work of sanctification in the heart. Therefore it is, that they who are full of faith, are also said to be full of the Holy Ghost. Acts vi. 5.

Thirdly. Speculative faith, as appears from the case of the devils, already referred to, does not necessarily include an *approbation* of the truth which is believed ; but without an approbation of the truth, justifying faith can not exist. It is described by the apostle as working by *love*. Gal. v. 6. Faith in God is the fruit of love to him. It is quite a different thing from a mere intellectual belief of divine truth ; it is an *approving* belief. It is not a simple belief of the fact, that there is an intelligent, almighty, and good being at the head of the universe ; but implies a holy *confidence* in him. The same exercise of heart, which is expressed by our *believing* in God, and having *faith* in him, is also expressed by our *trusting* in God, and having *stayed* our mind on him. Isa. xxvi. 3.

All that variety of expression, which is made use of in the scriptures to describe *faith in Christ*, is calculated to convince us, that the faith required must include in it a sweet approbation of the mediatorial character. The believer is described as *seeing* Christ—*coming* to him—*receiving* him—*trusting* in him—*committing* his all to his safe-keeping. John vi. 37, 40 ; i. 12. Eph. i. 12. 2 Tim. i. 12. Surely all this must mean something more than a conviction of the judgment, that Christ has proved himself to be a divinely commissioned messenger.

Fourthly. True faith differs from that which is speculative in this ; it can dwell in no heart unaccompanied by the other graces of the Spirit. For example ; this faith can not dwell in the heart of that man who is impenitent or implacable. Its influence is to *purify* men's hearts. Acts xv. 9. But that faith, which is a mere conviction of the judgment, can exist in the same heart which is hard, impenitent, and

unforgiving. We know it must be so in regard to the faith of devils.

Fifthly. Speculative faith is not at variance with self-righteousness. The pharisees, in distinction from the saducees, believed some important divine truths, but their faith had no influence to divorce them from a legal spirit: their own righteousness was all their confidence. And there is no impossibility in the supposition, that while the truth concerning Jesus Christ is believed, our own righteousness, and not his, should be our actual dependence for salvation: we may be nothing better than baptized pharisees. But the faith which saves the soul, is in perfect opposition to self-righteousness. The man who has this faith, can say, "I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." The life which he now lives, is by faith on the Son of God. Faith, casting away the garment of self-righteousness, comes to Christ to be clothed. Its language is, "Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Phil. iii. 9.

Sixthly. Speculative faith is radically defective in this; it is not, like saving faith, a principle of holy obedience. This is that grand point of difference between them which was noticed by the apostle James. He evidently supposed that a man might have a strong intellectual belief of divine truth; and yet be as destitute of evangelical obedience, as a dead body is of life and activity. There are at the present day innumerable examples of this inoperative faith. But the faith which unites the soul to Christ, is a principle of life. The good man lives by faith; and by virtue of its influence endures his trials, as seeing him who is invisible. It is an abiding principle. Abraham lived and died a believer; and this is true of all his spiritual seed. The church, as composed of all the subjects of grace, is described as coming up from the wilderness, leaning on her Beloved. Sol. Song, viii. 5.

2. It is important that we distinguish between that faith which secures salvation, and the *faith of miracles*. It appears from the scriptures, that there were some who prophesied and wrought miracles, and yet never knew the grace of God in truth. Christ said, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you." Matt. vii. 22, 23. It is in accordance with this declaration of the Savior, that the apostle says, "Though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing." 1 Cor. xiii. 2. This miracle-working faith, it seems, might be possessed by the man who had no charity, or love; but the faith, which avails to salvation, by uniting the soul to Christ, works by love, and can no more work without it, than a watch can work without its main spring.

The gift of prophecy did not necessarily suppose the existence of any holy confidence in God: and so it was with the gift of working miracles. As a power of predicting future events, must have been preceded by a revelation of those events, made to the mind of the prophet; so, in all probability, it was with the power of working mir-

acles. This, I think, must have been preceded by a special assurance, given to the mind of the person whom God was about to employ in this work, that he had a commission to do such a miracle, and that in attempting, he would be enabled to accomplish it. As Nebuchadnezzar could dream of the setting up of the kingdom of the God of heaven, without any love to him or his kingdom; and as Balaam had power given him to foretell the prosperity of that people, whom he at heart wished to curse; so might men receive power from God to work miracles, without exercising any love to his holy name. They might also have full confidence that they should be furnished with this wonder-working power, and still remain destitute of that faith which purifieth the heart.

Holy trust in God can rise to the highest pitch, and yet not bring with it the power of working miracles. The men, whom God employed in predicting future events and working miracles, were, for the most part, holy men. But they were not all such. Nor was every holy man endued with the spirit of prophecy or working miracles, even in those days when the church was furnished with these gifts. And the strongest believers at the present period, and for many generations past, have been equally incapable with the weakest, of foretelling future events, and of working miracles. Faith to work miracles was a miracle. It was a new revelation, made to the mind of the person to be employed in this work, concerning something which could not be known by a standing revelation. But the faith that saves the elect, requires no new revelation to draw it forth. It needs the Spirit, not to reveal something which we otherwise could not know, but to influence us to love the truth we do know. It needs the Spirit, to excite a holy confidence in the God of the Bible, and in the gracious promises he has there made to his church, and to all who love him. Though this faith is not miraculous, it is of a far superior nature to that by which miracles were wrought. Paul had been treating on miraculous gifts, when he said to the Corinthians, “Yet show I unto you *a more excellent way*.” He then proceeded immediately to describe that love, by which faith worketh; and which, we have already seen, lies at the foundation of all true religion.

By some it may be thought unnecessary to dwell on the distinction between justifying faith and the faith of miracles: seeing miracles have long since ceased, and consequently the faith by which they were wrought has also ceased. But it does not follow, as a certain consequence, because the Spirit of God has ceased to give the faith in question, that we are no longer in danger of being deceived by it. It is not at all incredible that Satan, whose object is to deceive that he may destroy, should so pervert the word of God in relation to this subject, as to induce many to imagine their faith to be of a holy nature, and wonderfully great, when in reality it is nothing better than a mere counterfeit of a faith now become obsolete.

Is not this of the nature of miracle-working faith;—when we feel a confidence of the futurity of an event, not because it is revealed in the word of God, but because it seems strongly impressed on our minds, that such an event will happen: for example; that some particular individual will become a convert? I would not say that God does



never, either by his own immediate agency, or by that of his angels, particularly guide our minds to make supplication for certain individuals: and if he excite in us holy and strong desires, these will tend to raise our hopes concerning the conversion of those individuals for whom we pray; though, while they remain in unregeneracy, we can not know with certainty, what are his determinations concerning them. But an entire confidence concerning their conversion, which is founded on an impression, however strong that impression may be, is nothing but a counterfeit of the miracle-working faith. There is no danger of our doing wrong in praying for these individuals, even if an *impression* has excited us to it; for we are authorized to make supplication for all men. But there is much danger of calling mere impressions by the name of *faith*, when they do not at all partake of its holy nature. Impressions may be made by evil spirits, but faith is produced only by the Spirit of God.

Some reader may wish to ask, What motive can induce an evil spirit to impress our minds with a belief, that certain individuals will be converted, when he perceives its effect is to excite us to pray for their conversion? To this it may be replied, it is greatly for the interest of the prince of darkness, to corrupt the doctrine of faith. When once it comes to this, that an impression concerning the happening of an event, not revealed in the Bible, is exalted into the place of holy faith, the way is prepared for him to practice and prosper. Satan himself has power (were he permitted,) to fill the world with a faith of this description; and it is a thing which he would gladly do. Let such a faith once gain an established character, and the mischief will be incalculable. They who have the reputation of praying men, may be led, under the influence of the faith of impression, to say to one and another of their impenitent neighbors, We have a strong faith for *you*; we have no doubt that you will yet be converted and saved. And would not the influence of this faith, thus made known to the persons concerning whose salvation it is exercised, (and who can say that it will not be made known in every instance?) be that of a moral soporific? Would it not have a similar tendency to lull them to sleep as the preaching of the doctrine of universal salvation? With that it agrees in assuring men who are destitute of holiness, that they shall be saved. And what, I would ask, is there to hinder the unregenerate from having the same kind of faith in relation to their own conversion? Satan may excite in them a strong belief that they shall be converted; and this belief they may imagine to be a scriptural faith. But it is quite a different thing from that which trusts in the Lord Jehovah, because that in him is everlasting strength.

This perversion of miraculous faith, in some instances, may seem as if it were built on the word of God; and yet be as baseless as when it rests on a mere impression, unsupported by a text of scripture. Let it be illustrated. I will suppose some believer in the Bible shall have the following passage suggested to his mind, and, as he imagines, powerfully impressed: "Go thou to the sea and cast a hook, and take the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth thou shalt find a piece of money." Matt. xvii, 27. Perhaps he did not remember there was such a text in the Bible, and he could not tell

what now brought it into his mind : but the impression is very strong, that if he will only believe, and go and do likewise, it will happen to him as it did to Peter. The man may plead in favor of the genuineness of his faith, that it is built on the word of God. But in this he errs ; for although Christ required *Peter* to do this, in full confidence that he should take the fish and find in his mouth the piece of money, he did not give it as a general direction, to tell every other man who should cast a hook into the sea, that he should be alike successful. The faith, supposed in this case, I think all must see, has no solid foundation.

Let me suppose another case : A certain sick man has this text thrown into his mind : “ Behold I will add unto thy days fifteen years.” Isa. xxxviii. 5. This he considers as a promise sent from God to assure him of his recovery, and of the protraction of his life. He declares it to be his full belief, that he shall have his life lengthened out fifteen years longer ; and then perhaps dies within fifteen days. But some will say, Does not the promise of God lay a sufficient foundation for our faith ? Certainly it does. *Hezekiah* had a full warrant to believe his life would be lengthened out fifteen years, for the Lord had promised it. But the sick man in question was not required to believe in a similar protraction of his life ; for to him no such promise had been made.

Let me suppose a third case, which is, indeed, not a mere supposition, but a case, the like of which has often occurred : A sinner, whose fears of future punishment are excited, has this promise suggested to him or impressed on his mind : “ Son be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.” In consequence of this impression, he believes his sins are forgiven. But this man’s faith has no better foundation than the faith mentioned in the other two examples, which have been supposed. Will it follow as a necessary consequence, because Jesus told a particular man that his sins were forgiven, that every other man’s sins are forgiven ? Or does the act of reading, or thinking of this promise create the evidence of our forgiveness ? But you will say, Has not every sinner in the world a right to appropriate a promise of forgiveness made to any one of them ? We answer, Yes, provided he can know he possesses that *character* to which the promise was made. Christ, who searcheth the hearts of men, could say to the individual whom he knew to be possessed of this character, “ *Thy* sins be forgiven thee.” But the syllables and words of this promise can be impressed on an impenitent as well as a penitent mind. And such an impression can be made by an evil spirit, whose motive for doing it, is no less than the hope of being able by deceptions to effect the ruin of an immortal soul.

All such confidence as that which has now been described, seems to be an abuse of the faith of miracles. And I am inclined to believe it to be an abuse which has been very common in past ages ; and even now may be doing greater mischief than Christians are aware of.

3. *Presumptive* faith, or that which is exercised by the false convert (whatever may be the name we give it) differs essentially from the faith required in order to justification. The faith of the false convert has the appearance of rising far above a mere historical belief of

the gospel. It partakes of *feeling*, and sometimes a high degree of it. Yet since the false convert makes no pretension to the power of working miracles, we distinguish his faith, not only from that which is merely speculative, but also from that which is miraculous. But that perversion of miraculous faith, which has been described under the preceding head, is also presumptive, and it is not improbable that it often constitutes the faith on which the man who has a false conversion rests his hope of salvation.

The stony ground, in the parable of the sower, is designed to represent something more than speculative believers; it is manifestly the case of false converts, who think they are something when they are nothing. They not only hear the word, but are said to *receive it with joy*; thinking themselves to be interested in the salvation of Christ. They talk of their faith as something quite different from cold speculation. But its dying away in the time of trial proves it to be radically defective. "And these," says the divine teacher, "have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away." *For a while they believe*; their faith is *temporary*. And thus it may be proper to describe the faith of every man who apostatizes from an apparent conversion, even though his rational conviction of the truth of the gospel should remain to the end of life. Every such apostate may be considered as making shipwreck of faith, and of a good conscience, whether his apostacy terminate in infidelity, in heresy, or in a wicked life.

Now since there is a species of faith of which we can make shipwreck, while there is another which shines brighter, the more it is tried, how important it must be to distinguish between them. The faith of the false converts, in whatever way obtained, has one common nature, namely, *selfishness*. They believe only for the sake of securing their own salvation: and their faith leans on their own righteousness, rather than on that of the Redeemer. All classes of false converts have a faith which is presumptive and groundless. One is encouraged to believe, because he fancies he has done good works enough to save him. Another encourages himself to trust in the Redeemer, because he believes he assumed his guilt in such a sense as to render him guiltless; and the belief of this fills him with joy. Such a presumptive faith is apt to be excited by a selfish application of scripture promises; as though they were so many testimonies of divine regard to himself personally considered. Some there are whose whole effort it is, to believe themselves to be in a justified state, without any evidence from scripture, sense, or reason; and as soon as they can believe it, they consider it becomes a fact. Their believing it without any evidence, is, in their view, a conquest over their unbelief. According to this representation of the subject, that text (Gal. vi. 3) would need to undergo an alteration, and be read thus: For if a man think himself to be something when he *is nothing*, then he is *something*.

Now everything of this nature differs widely from the faith, by which we are brought into a state of justification. Without any works of righteousness on which to depend, without any promise to assure us that *we* are the favorites of heaven, and without viewing the



atonement as removing the desert of punishment from a single sinner, faith discovers a sufficient warrant to come to Christ, and repose confidence in him. "It is my duty," says the believer, "as one of the fallen race of Adam, to put my trust in Christ; not because there is any revelation made to me, either open or secret, that *I* have a title to the benefits of his death more than any other man. It is my duty to believe in Jesus Christ, because God hath set him forth to be a propitiation, to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. He is freely offered to me, and I am commanded to believe on the name of the Son of God. I can now see, that to continue to reject the proffered salvation, is nothing less than to continue in a state of hostility to the divine government." Love to one's self may lead him to believe he shall be saved, but nothing short of love to God and the mediatorial work, can draw forth that faith which unites the soul to Christ, and entitles it to all the benefits of his death. That man has the most essential ingredient in justifying faith, *who is heartily pleased with God's way of saving sinners*, though he may not as yet have imagined himself to be in a state of safety; while the most confident faith that wants this ingredient, is worthless and ruinous.

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

Faith is harmonious with the other branches of the *experimental* system. We have already gone over four Articles: the *first two* exhibit the affection of love, benevolence and complacency. The view which we have just taken of faith, enables us to see that it bears a very near relation to *love*. The scripture speaks of it as *working by love*; intimating that love is the very thing which causes its existence. That faith which implies fiducial trust in God, (and a faith which lacks this does not belong to the department of Christian experience,) never can exist until God is loved and delighted in; and it becomes stronger or weaker, as our delight in God is augmented or diminished. Faith in Christ is the fruit of a holy delight in his spotless purity, and in his mediatorial work; therefore the more love we have to Christ, the more freely and unreservedly do we commit our souls into his hands. But that faith which is built on a selfish application of promises, and not a discovery of the real glory of the Redeemer, does not require holy love for its support. If my faith consists in believing that God loves *me*, and that Christ died for *me in particular*, and that I shall certainly be made happy forever, it may remain strong when my love is weak; yea, it may remain strong when my love all centres in myself.

Submission or reconciliation to God forms the *third* Article of religious experiences: and between a spirit of reconciliation and a spirit of faith, the agreement is very apparent. When we cheerfully submit to the will of God, and are reconciled to his dominion over us, we shall be prepared to put our trust in him. The same man who is eminent for submission, will be strong in faith. The submission of Job was great; but his faith was no less distinguished, else he could

not have said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Job xiii. 15.

Faith in the Redeemer's righteousness, which is more especially the faith of the Gospel, is in harmony with a cordial reconciliation to divine government. The whole system of salvation by the Redeemer, gives God his throne: and that man who has been made willing to have it so, must be prepared to rejoice in such a God-exalting system.

Faith harmonizes with *repentance*, the Article which immediately precedes it. Faith and repentance have such an intimate relation, in the religion of creatures who are saved from their sins by an atonement, that they seem to be like two friends who are never apart. They are joined together in the ministry of Christ, whose manner it was to call on his hearers to *repent* and *believe* the gospel. See Mark i. 15. These two graces were united in the preaching of Paul, wherever he went, both among Jews and Gentiles. See Acts xx. 21. Repentance prepares us to be pleased with the atonement of Christ, as a divine expedient for fixing an infinite stigma on that sin which is now loathsome; and from effecting our complete deliverance from its power and punishment. When God's own Son came in the likeness of sinful flesh, he *condemned sin in the flesh*. Rom. viii. 3. The manifestation of the evil of sin which was made by the death of Christ, is in perfect harmony with those feelings towards it, which God has given to the penitent. And without such feelings towards sin, none are prepared to come to Christ for his salvation.

Faith is also in harmony with the *doctrinal* system. With the *first* Article, the foundation of all truth, faith manifestly accords; and without such an article there could be no place for its existence. The creed of the atheist makes no room for the exercise of such an affection as *trust*; unless it be trust in his own heart, or in depraved and dying fellow men. Beings in our situation, who are of yesterday and know nothing; who are crushed before the moth, and who drink iniquity as water, need a Being of infinite knowledge, power, and mercy, in whom to trust. Sanctification of heart prepares us to perceive the most satisfactory evidence of the existence of such a Being; also, to place our confidence in him. By faith the friends of God commit to him their own interests, and those of the universe; and indeed every thing which relates to the glory of his own great name. Did they not believe that his natural and moral attributes were absolutely infinite, their confidence would not be unwavering. If they were not fully convinced that it is impossible for God to lie, the foundation of their trust would be torn away. Faith has a very special reference to the *veracity of God*.

The doctrine of a divine plan and operation, comprehending every thing great and minute in creation and providence, does much to lay a foundation for that faith which holds such an important place in the Christian's experience. [See Part I. Art. II. and XIV.] When we hear the Almighty proclaim, "My counsel shall stand:" and when we hear it asserted by an apostle, that *he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*, it has a tendency to increase our faith in God. These interesting doctrines are sometimes made use of to excite in the

minds of God's children a pleasing confidence in him, even when his way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known. "Faith believes that he sits and rules the affairs of the world with an all-seeing eye and an all-moving hand."\*

Justifying faith, as we have seen, has special reference to Christ as the Redeemer of men. Viewing faith in this light, it has a manifest agreement with most of the other Articles of our system. It agrees with the *third*, namely, that which teaches that God's law, together with the government founded on it, is perfect. "Do we," said the apostle, "make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." There are creatures who will eternally hold their seats in heaven, by virtue of a law-righteousness, while others will rise to that blessedness by the righteousness of faith; and yet there will be no discord in their songs before the throne. Rev. v. 9—12. Angels and saints have each their peculiar favors to acknowledge; and yet they can sweetly unite in a common anthem of praise to God and the Lamb; yea, they can unite in giving thanks for special favors conferred on each other. But there is no way for the *children of men* to unite in the worship of heaven, only by their all obtaining "like precious faith;" for *we* have all sinned, and therefore by the deeds of the law *no flesh* can be justified. Law-keepers, such as the holy angels, and believers in Christ, can unite in heaven; but self-righteous pharisees, and they who depend on the Redeemer's righteousness for justification, could have no fellowship in the worship of heaven.

There is an admirable agreement between *faith*, the *fifth* Article in the experimental, and *atonement*, the *fifth* in the doctrinal system. It is by a union of these that we obtain the *eleventh* Article of doctrines, namely, justification. When the apostle, in his epistle to the Romans, speaks of sinners as being justified freely by grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, he adds, "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, *through faith in his blood.*" As soon as faith, considered as one of the fruits of the Spirit, comes in contact with the doctrine of atonement, the justification unto life, is the immediate consequence.

The *sixth* Article states the fact, that, through the atonement salvation is freely offered to all men. Now faith is a cheerful acceptance of that free offer which, (according to the *seventh* Article,) had always before been wickedly rejected. And the doctrine of regeneration, which is contained in the *eighth*, makes us understand how the unbeliever became a believer; and how he who once saw no comeliness in the Redeemer, came to be so charmed with his beauty. Faith confides in him, who has begun the good work, to carry it on. It is the more emboldened to do this, because, according to the *ninth* and *tenth* Articles, it is clearly perceived to have been undertaken as a matter of pure mercy.

The doctrine, which teaches that there is a promised connection between grace begun, and grace perfected, lays a foundation for strong confidence in God. According to this doctrine believers are kept by the power of God; and yet it is not without the exercise of faith on

\* Arbp. Leighton.



their part. The certainty of the saints' perseverance in holiness is grounded on the covenant of grace, which is ordered in all things and sure. And the covenant of grace which is established with believers, grows out of the covenant of redemption, in which the three Persons of the Godhead are the covenanters. They are exhibited to us as being in covenant with one another, to redeem, sanctify, pardon, and eternally save all such as shall have fled to the gospel refuge,—all such as have trusted in Christ. Well, then, may Christians trust in the triune God, who can not disappoint their hopes of perseverance in holiness, without denying himself, by failing to fulfill the mutual engagements of this most ancient of all covenants. See John vi. 37—40. Psal. lxxxix. 24—31. God was willing that the heirs of promise should have strong consolation; and in a covenant of grace he was able to give them this strong consolation. When difficulties are so multiplied, that to an eye of sense, it seems impossible these promises should be made good, against hope they believe in hope, judging him faithful who has promised, and being fully persuaded that what he has promised he is able also to perform.

And what doctrine is there in all the word of God with which faith is not harmonious? It surely harmonizes with the doctrine of a future judgment and eternal rewards. Faith believes and makes dependence on these things, which are not as yet seen; and at the appearing of Jesus Christ, it will be distinguished from unbelief, and be found unto praise and honor and glory.

It is a question whether this grace will constitute any part of the character of the saints, after they are received to heaven. Faith, as distinguished from *sight*, will cease; but as expressive of trust in God, it will not only remain, but be forever gaining strength. The faith of those who are redeemed from among men distinguishes their religion from that of holy angels, who are justified by the deeds of the law; and in this sense they will need to live by faith in heaven, as much as they do on earth. The manner of their justification will not be altered by their removing from earth to heaven, any more than it now is by their removing from one part of the earth to another. As they rise to heaven by virtue of that union with the Redeemer, which is constituted by faith, so will they remain there by virtue of the same union. Faith, therefore, considered as that exercise of the heart, by which we renounce the deeds of the law, and depend on the atonement of Christ for justification and all its consequent blessings, will never fail, but be as lasting as the blessedness of heaven.

#### REMARKS.

1. I wish to remark, that, by giving faith so late a place among the Articles of Christian experience, it has not been my design to declare it to be inferior to all those which stand before it. By putting it after repentance (for example) I have not intended to intimate its inferiority, but rather to show the natural order in which these graces of the Spirit take place in the renewed heart. A speculative faith must go before repentance; but a saving faith—a trust in the Redeemer's righteousness—follows it. This is the order which Christ gave

to these two Christian graces, when, in his preaching he said, "*Repent ye, and believe the gospel.*" The same order was observed by the apostle, who tells us that he testified both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Mark i. 15. Acts xx. 21. No man can truly come to Christ for salvation, unless he comes in the character of a *sinner*; and until he becomes a penitent, he has no heart to come in this character. Since his repentance is exercised towards God, as the moral Governor of the world, he can have contrition, while an atonement for sin is not directly in his view; but he can not come to Christ for salvation, until his heart is prepared to condemn that sin which the death of Christ so strikingly condemns.

Faith is more appropriately an *evangelical* grace than *love*; since it serves to distinguish the religion of the *gospel* from that of the law: "The law is not of faith." Gal. iii. 12. The law does not present, as the ground of acceptance with God, another's righteousness, requiring the subject of moral government to receive it by faith; it requires him to have a perfect personal righteousness, which would preclude the necessity of his depending on that of another. The new covenant, however, as well as the old, seems to give love the highest rank. "And now" says the apostle, "abideth faith, hope, charity, (i. e. love,) these three: but the greatest of these is charity." 1 Cor. xiii. 13. The apostle represents love to be the fulfilling, not only of all the religion of the law, but also of the gospel. Love is made more consequential than any part of the experimental system, just as the root or body of the tree is of more consequence than any of its branches; or the fountain than any of its streams. Faith itself, though an eminent grace, is nothing more than one of these branches, or streams. Is not this the truth taught in that passage, where faith is said to *work by love*? When the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, as it is in regeneration, a benevolent nature is imparted, which, like a root planted in the ground, has sufficient virtue to put forth all those graces which constitute the branches of the tree of righteousness. As to the *nature* of the different branches, there is no pre-eminence of one over another; for they all proceed from one common root.

2. There must be a great difference between the religion of either a moralist or a pharisee, and that of a true believer. In many of their externals there is an agreement; for the believer is moral, nor is he less exact than the pharisee in paying his tithes. But he entirely differs from them both in this, that he depends on his Redeemer for righteousness and strength. "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved? It is the spouse of Christ—it is every true believer. While the moralist and the pharisee walk erect, the believer *leans* as he walks. He feels that he cannot proceed a step, in his spiritual pilgrimage, in any other attitude. "Without me," said the Savior, "ye can do nothing." This the Christian believes to be strictly true. He is convinced, by scripture, and by his own experience, that his dependence is entire, extending to everything relative to his animal and rational nature, to his religious character and enjoyments. When the exercises of his heart correspond with

these sentiments, he lives by faith. When faith is strong it leads him entirely out of himself. His language now is, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him." Though all the holy affections which give life to the soul, be in ever so vigorous exercise, he depends not on them, but on him who is the Author and Finisher of his faith. While the just live by faith, and know they could not live without it, they do not depend on faith to keep them, but on the power of God to keep them through faith. There is nothing for which they feel more entirely dependent than for faith itself.

Are we experimentally acquainted with this hidden life of faith? Has our experience enabled us to understand what Paul meant when he said, "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God: I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me?" The life of faith is a very different thing from a life of self-righteousness—a very different thing from a mere scrupulous attention to external observances, whether moral or religious. If we are living the life of faith, our souls will rely on the grace of God to aid us in the performance of external duties, and to give them an internal purity. And when our holiest works are done, we shall rely alone on grace for acceptance. If our faith be of the right kind, it purifies our hearts, buoys us up under the troubles of this life, and evinces its holy nature by prompting us to good works. An apostle has declared, that, "as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

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## ARTICLE VI.

HOPE HAS A PLACE IN THE EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION OF ALL SUCH AS ARE IN THE WAY TO HEAVEN.

HOPE is the anticipation of some good which is not yet in possession. Like fear, it expects that which is future, but with this material difference; that while fear *dreads*, hope *desires* to have its expectations realized. We cease to hope, when the good anticipated comes into our possession; for, saith the scripture, "What a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" Rom. viii. 24. When our hopes are raised too high, an actual possession is often attended with a diminution of enjoyment. But when they are fully realized, the reverse is true. In such a case, we willingly part with the pleasure of anticipation, for that of actual possession. The word *hope*, however, may still be ap-



plied to the prospect of the continued enjoyment of the same good that we now possess. It would not be speaking correctly to say, that glorified saints hope for heaven, seeing they are actually there; and yet it may be proper to speak of their hopes as looking forward to an *eternity* of that blessedness of which they already begin to partake. If doubt or uncertainty belonged to the very nature of this grace, no place could be found for its exercise in heaven; but we know it does not, for the scriptures speak of "the *full assurance* of hope." Heb. vi. 11.

This world is full of hopes. It is common to almost the whole race, in the present life, to be indulging hopes in relation to some real or imaginary good which they have in prospect. But the hope of the Christian is something different from all the rest, and is indeed the only one which the scriptures consider to be worthy of the name. Other men are said to be not only without God, but also "*without hope* in the world." "The hope of the righteous shall be gladness; but the expectation of the wicked shall perish." Prov. x. 28. The hope of the Christian differs from that of the men of the world, in this; that while theirs relates to happiness which is to be enjoyed here, his relates principally to that which is to be enjoyed hereafter. The actual possession of worldly good, whether it consist in wealth, honor, power, or sensual enjoyments, is always attended with disappointment; it does not equal the expectation. "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase." Eccl. v. 10. "There be many," (viz. all the graceless multitude,) "that say, Who will show us any good?" Ps. iv. 6. Their inquiry implies that they have not yet found the object of their pursuit, and that they do not know where it is to be found. The hopes of the men of the world must appear vain indeed, since they aspire to nothing more durable than a portion in this short life. "Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow; for what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away." Jam. iv. 13, 14.

The Christian's hope differs not only from theirs, who bound their prospects by a sensible horizon, but also from that of many, who seem to agree with him in expecting their enjoyment in the life to come. I refer to such as entertain a groundless hope that they have a treasure in heaven. We read of the *hypocrite's hope*; by which is meant his expectation of future happiness. The hypocrite is professedly a man of piety, and the hope which he entertains, looks forward to that state which is beyond the grave. The hypocrite, as described in the word of God, is a man who thinks himself to be something when he is nothing; who is pure in his own eyes, when he is not washed from his filthiness. See Gal. vi. 3. Prov. xxx. 12. His hope, in common with that of the Christian, reaches forward to eternity; and yet it is fundamentally defective. That hope which constitutes a branch of the Christian's experience, is as really different from that of the hypocrite or false convert, as it is from that of the worldling. And it is much more important it should be shown wherein it differs from the hope of the former, than from that of the latter.

There is perhaps no way in which we can form so clear an idea of

the Christian's hope, as by contrasting it with that of the hypocrite. While this method may assist the true convert to discern the genuineness of his religion, it may, through the mercy of God, enable the false convert to perceive the spuriousness of his.

1. The hope of the true convert differs from that of the false, in its *efficient cause*. The scriptures attribute it to the efficiency of the Holy Ghost. Rom. xv. 13. 2 Thess. ii. 16. In examining into the genuineness of our religion, the Bible would lead us to inquire, how we came by it; who is the author of it? This is one way by which true religion is distinguished from that which is the spontaneous growth of the natural heart. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his; if his religion is not produced by the Spirit of Christ, it will not be Christ-like; for it is that only which is born of the Spirit which is spirit. John iii. 6. If the Spirit of God has not convinced us of sin, righteousness, and judgment, we have not known the plague of our own heart; and unless this divine Agent has revealed Christ to us, our knowledge of him is not a saving nature. Our love, faith, and hope, must be the fruit of the Spirit, else our religion is vain. Though we are incapable of having any direct perception of the operations of the Spirit, yet we can distinguish *spiritual* affections, which are the result of his operations, from those which can be excited by other means. The hope of the hypocrite, or false convert, is not in the most proper sense, *the fruit of the Spirit*. Men may be subjects of the common and of the miraculous influences of the Spirit; and while under these may, without a radical change, obtain a hope that they have become heirs to a heavenly inheritance; but their hope is to be attributed to some other cause than the Spirit of God. It is generated in their own selfish hearts by the agency of that spirit whose business it is to deceive that he may destroy. Nothing short of the *transforming* influences of the Spirit of God can beget the hope which will prove an anchor to the soul.

2. The hope of the true convert differs from that of the false, in its *object*. The hope of both looks forward to another world, and they agree in calling the happiness which they anticipate by the same name; but in reality they desire two different heavens. The true convert is said to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Rom. v. 2. To see the glory of God displayed, both on earth and in heaven, is what he desires above every thing else. "This," said our blessed Lord, "is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent." John xvii. 3. To know, in a holy manner, the true God and Jesus Christ, is that eternal life, that enduring blessedness, which the Christian hopes to enjoy in heaven. He hopes to see Christ as he is, and to be forever like him. 1 John, iii. 2, 3. The heaven in which he desires to dwell, is a place where the holiness of God will be most advantageously displayed; where his law will be written in every heart; and where all will cordially unite in ascribing to him the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. A heaven less pure than this, would not satisfy the desires of him who is born of the Spirit.

But this is not the heaven which is desired by the false convert. He may call the heaven he desires a *holy place*: but let him search

his heart, and he will be able to perceive that the glory of God, namely, the exhibition of his holiness, is not the food upon which he is prepared to feast through eternal ages. It is not the prospect of seeing the holy Redeemer, and being forever like him, that raises his hopes, and stimulates him to run the race set before him. Does such a one, I would ask, long for a heaven, where he shall never have another selfish affection, another proud imagination; where his trust in the Savior's righteousness will never be weakened by any self-righteous dependence; and where nothing will be done, spoken, or thought of, which will grieve the Holy Spirit of God?

3. The two hopes in question differ as to *the nature of the evidences* by which they are acquired and maintained. The true convert dares not indulge any hope of heaven, until he discovers in himself that character to which the promise of heaven is made. Nor, when indulged, can this hope be perpetuated, save by the same evidence through which it was obtained. But the false convert acquires and maintains his hope by other means; for he certainly possesses nothing of the character to which the promises are made.

In the beginning of the fifth chapter of Romans, after the apostle had spoken of hope, he proceeds to tell us how it is acquired: "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." By searching the scriptures the Christian finds that God has promised the kingdom of heaven to all, without respect of persons, who are possessed of a holy character. Of God's ability or faithfulness to fulfil this promise, he can not entertain a doubt. All that he needs, therefore, to give him hope concerning his own future blessedness, is to know that he possesses the character to which the promise is made. Without some evidence of a renovated heart, manifested by love to God, submission to his will, repentance for sin, and faith in Christ, together with answerable practice, he can have no hope at all. These other graces of the Spirit are antecedent to hope, and form the only solid basis on which it can rest. With their growth hope is strengthened, and not without it. The graces of the Spirit, displaying themselves in correspondent actions, constitute the witness of the Spirit—the only witness which can be relied on—to prove the fact that we are the sons of God. This witness begins to testify in our favor, when we begin to love and serve God, and becomes more full in its testimony, as we advance in sanctification. As experience begets, so it nurtures hope; and when it is improved by tribulation, it serves to render hope stronger and more vigorous. The apostle told the Ephesian saints, that *after* they believed, they were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise; and that this was the earnest of their inheritance, i. e. the foretaste and evidence of future felicity. By this sealing of the Spirit, which was subsequent to their being brought into union with Christ, he meant the progressive work of sanctification which this holy Agent was carrying on in their hearts. And this he manifestly considered as furnishing the only proper support for a well grounded hope that they should finally enjoy the heavenly inheritance.

The hope of the true convert rises and falls with the evidences of



his piety. In rising, it passes through various degrees, from a weak, trembling hope, to a full assurance. Old experiences, which are not strengthened by new, are not sufficient to support it. It is quite different with the false convert. As the hope he entertains was acquired without the discovery of any thing in his heart of the nature of true holiness, so it is maintained without it. It is kept up either by the repetition of false experiences, or by the recollection of old ones, which, like the leaves of autumn, have faded away. There are not a few of the members of the church of Christ, whose religious affections have long since died away; and yet their hopes of future happiness seem hardly to have flagged. It has by some been considered as an evidence of peculiarly strong faith, to keep up an unshaken hope, without any evidence derived from present sanctification. The case of Abraham has been adduced in support of it; of whom it is said, that *against hope he believed in hope*. But this can not mean, that he cherished a hope that he was a saint, in contrariety to scriptural evidence. It meant, what is altogether more honorable to his character as a believer, that he hoped or confided in God, that he would fulfill those promises, which, to the eye of sense, appeared so improbable as to be hopeless. Although we have no warrant to hope concerning our piety, any further than we have scriptural evidence of its existence; yet it is our duty to *believe* in God, without waiting for a particle of evidence that we are already accepted of him. The foundation we need for the exercise of faith, is nothing more than evidence that God has encouraged us to trust in him, and that he is a being worthy of our fullest confidence. But to entertain a hope that we shall enjoy his favor, we must have evidence, not only that he is worthy of our confidence, but also that we have actually confided in him. While, therefore, all classes of men, good and bad, false converts as well as the true, are culpable for not immediately exercising *faith* in God, even the *faith of assurance*, it is wrong for them to exercise a *full assurance of hope*, that they are entitled to the heavenly inheritance, when no such title exists. For the exercise of faith, then, we need only to know, that the character of God is good; but for the exercise of hope, it is necessary to know that ours also is good—that is, to know that we have received the truth in the love of it.

4. The hope of the true convert greatly differs from that of the false, in *the influence it exerts on his heart and life*. As his hope originates in the discovery of some conformity to God, and is preserved and increased by perceiving a growing conformity, it furnishes a powerful stimulus to growth in grace. Nor is this the only way in which it has a tendency to promote his purification. The hope he has of being received to a heaven of perfect holiness when he dies, is calculated to sanctify him while he lives. "Every man," saith the apostle, "that hath this hope in him, (that is, the hope of being ultimately with the Redeemer in heaven,) purifieth himself, even as he is pure." 1 John, iii. 3. By this passage we are taught, that they, who have a scriptural hope of dwelling with Christ in heaven, and of being forever conformed to him, will even now be stimulated by it to seek a careful imitation of him, both in their temper and in their conduct. When Paul admonished the saints at Rome, that it was high time for.

them to awake out of sleep, since their salvation was nearer than when they first believed, it implied, that a hope of enjoying at length the perfect salvation of heaven, is calculated to exert a holy influence on our present conduct; and that it is reasonable to expect, the nearer we approach to that perfect state, the greater will be the influence that such a hope will exert.

While the Christian's hope stimulates him to grow in grace, that of the hypocrite hardens his heart, and remarkably disqualifies him even for its reception. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him." Prov. xxvi. 12. There is more hope of the sinner who is immoral, and who is thus known to be a fool, than of the sinner who has the hypocrite's hope to shield him against the arrows of conviction. Since such a one builds on a false religion, and seeks a heaven which is destitute of holiness, his hope has no tendency to cause him to purify himself. If at any time he appears to do it, it is only an appearance. His expectations of future blessedness, and the evidences on which they rest, are destitute of real holiness; so that, however pure he may be in his own eyes, he is not washed from his filthiness.

The Christian's hope supports him in his arduous conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil. It is recounted among the pieces of armor, with which he is to clothe himself, that he may be able to stand in the day of battle. Hope answers to the warrior's helmet. "And putting on," said the apostle, "the breast-plate of faith and love; *and for an helmet the hope of salvation.*" The more there is of the true hope of the salvation of Christ, the more vigorously will the Christian warfare be carried on: but if our expectation of future blessedness be false, it either prevents us from fighting, or leads us to fight with others than the enemies of the Lord.

Hope is a joyful exercise; therefore the apostle classes it with joy, when he says, "Rejoicing in hope." Rom. xii. 12. The joy produced by a purifying hope, is a purified joy. It is an anticipation of what the believer will receive when he shall enter into the joy of his Lord. But the joy of the hypocrite, or false convert, like his hope, is altogether selfish, and therefore undesirable. The angels of God do not rejoice in his joy; for they know that the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment. Job xx. 5.

5. The two hopes which have now been contrasted, will have a *very different termination*; the one will be fully realized in the blessedness of heaven, while the other will meet a complete disappointment. The hope which the righteous has in his death, and which he had all along in his life, will not make him ashamed when he shall awake in the world of spirits; for he will then find himself surrounded with a guard of holy angels, sent down to convoy him to the abodes of the blessed. Hope is the Christian's anchor; and a good hope is an anchor both sure and steadfast, which entereth into that within the vail. While he is yet on this tempestuous sea, his anchor is cast within the vail; and there will he at length arrive in safety, through the guidance and protection of Jesus the forerunner, who, in behalf of his people, has already entered that haven of eternal rest.

But the sure and steadfast anchor will not illustrate the hope of the

false converts. This may not remain with them through half the voyage of life. The religious course of such is often very short; and sometimes their hope vanishes with their religion; but if it should continue to the end of life, it will then terminate. "The hypocrite's hope shall perish." "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?" Job viii. 13, and xxvii. 8. They who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others, will now become convinced that their boasted attainments were nothing better than self-righteousness. They will know they did not love God, and that they did not embrace the true gospel of Jesus Christ. They will now perceive that the heaven which they hoped for, was of an entirely different character from the heaven of the Bible. They will find themselves in hell, at the very time when they expected to have been in heaven. Their hope is exchanged for despair.

There is no discord in the scriptures in relation to this subject. The testimony they give is harmonious. The hope which they approve has one uniform character; and such is its character, that it is never described as the spontaneous growth of the natural heart, but as the fruit of the Spirit. The scriptures speak nothing against the hope of the righteous; nor in favor of the hope of the hypocrite.

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

First. Let us compare it with those Articles of the *experimental* system which have been considered.

*Hope* has such an entire agreement with *faith*, that it often seems difficult to distinguish between them. Thus it is said, "*Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established.*" "*Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him.*" "That your *faith* and *hope* might be in God." 2 Chron. xx. 20. Ps. xlii. 5. 1 Pet. i. 21. There is, however, a difference; for some things are believed which are not desirable: also, things past as well as to come; but the things which we hope for are future, and, in our own estimation, always desirable. When, however, the object of our faith is at once a future and a wished-for event, then faith and hope have a near resemblance. Faith leads the way, and, confiding in the promise of that God who can not lie, expects the promised good: hope follows after, and, relying on the future reception of this good, enters, by anticipation, upon the immediate enjoyment of it. A well-grounded hope of salvation grows out of that faith in Christ, by which we commit our souls to his keeping; and it supposes us to have evidence that we possess the faith in question. And though faith may sometimes be much stronger than hope, yet an increase of the former usually produces a corresponding increase of the latter. It is when the God of hope fills the saints with all joy and peace in *believing*, that they *abound in hope*. Rom. xv. 13.

There is doubtless as perfect a harmony between hope and *repentance*, as between hope and faith, though perhaps it is not equally discernible. Without having exercised that repentance which is unto salvation, you may hope to escape future misery; (and such a hope is probably cherished by the impenitent world at large;) but without such repentance, you can not desire a place in that heaven where every



inhabitant will abhor sin. On the other hand, it is easy to see why a penitent sinner, who abhors himself, should desire and hope for a heaven from which all sin shall be forever excluded.

Again, the Christian hope perfectly accords with that *spirit of reconciliation and submission*, which constitutes the subject of the *third Article*. The rebel who has become truly submissive and reconciled to God, is prepared to hope for a place in that world where stands the *throne* of God, and where his *sovereignty* is universally acknowledged. Rev. xxii. 3. The unsubdued rebel, on the contrary, can never truly hope for the heaven where God reigns.

Between this and the *first two Articles* of experience, there is also an observable agreement. The love of complacency in holy characters can not be exercised, without the existence of benevolent love, both in the subjects and objects of that complacency; and that hope of heaven which the scriptures approve as genuine, manifestly implies complacency in holy characters: there must then, of necessity, be a perfect concord between love, (in both its modifications,) and hope. And with this agree the words of the apostle: "And hope maketh not ashamed, because *the love of God* is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." Rom. v. 5. Where the love of God is not shed abroad in the heart, there can be no purifying hope; no such hope as desires to dwell in the presence of the Holy One, and to have its eternity of blessedness consist in giving and receiving manifestations of the purest love.

Secondly. This Article of experience is harmonious with the *doctrinal* system.

The Christian's hope is not a baseless fabric—a castle in the air. That truth, which is comprehended in the gospel of Jesus Christ, is the foundation, broad and solid, on which is reared the hope of eternal life. This hope requires for its support, such doctrinal truths as those which were exhibited in the First Part of this work.

It is manifest there could be no foundation for such a hope as the Christian indulges, if the *first* of those Articles were not true. Were there no God, there could be no well-founded hope; for the Christian's hope is in God—a God of unbounded perfection. Out of this doctrinal truth, namely, the existence of a God, grow all the rest, and they all tend to give stability to hope. When the Christian contemplates God as the author of the work of creation and providence; planning the whole by his own wisdom, and executing it by his power; (as represented in the *second* and *last* Articles of the series,) his hope, no less than his admiration, is greatly strengthened.

When he takes a view of the law, as exhibited in the *third Article*, and observes the holiness of its precepts, the dreadfulness of its threatenings, and the impossibility of its ever being altered or repealed, it gives additional strength to his hope.

Though the Christian believes in the apostacy of Adam, and the consequent depravity of all his race, yet, because he also believes that Christ has made an infinite atonement for this depravity, he sees as good a foundation for hope, as if he had a sinless obedience of his own to present. [See Art. iv. and v.]

To cherish a hope of eternal life, the Christian needs to believe the

*sixth* Article of our doctrinal series, viz. that God actually and sincerely makes to every man, individually, the offer of pardon and salvation, on condition of his compliance with the requisite terms. And if he believes the *seventh* Article, (which it would seem he can not disbelieve, if he has become acquainted with his own heart,) then he also needs to believe the *eighth*, in order to give him any hope. Nor can he believe the *eighth*, without also believing the *ninth* and *tenth*; for he sees that if regeneration were not an act of sovereignty, resulting from the election of grace, instead of the foreseen good works of the elect, he could indulge no hopes of salvation. And were the least particle of merit made necessary to his *justification*, he could expect nothing better than to have the wrath of God abide on him; therefore a belief in our *eleventh* Article must be essential to his hope.

Take from our doctrinal system its *twelfth* Article, and the Christian would not have a sufficient foundation on which to base his hope. It lays hold on eternal life, as the consummation of its desires and expectations. It is "the hope of salvation," and is therefore compared to an anchor which is cast within the harbor, while the ship itself is still at sea. Were we, then, to erase the *twelfth* Article, we should cut the cable, and leave the ship to the mercy of the winds. But when we once understand, that between regeneration and eternal life there is an infallible connection, (a truth which the doctrine of *perseverance* teaches,) and that the promise and oath of the unchangeable Jehovah are pledged to sustain the gracious work, which he has begun in the heart of the believer, then we discover a foundation for the Christian's hope, which is both sure and steadfast. Without this infallible connection between grace and glory, though one might know that he was called and justified, "I see not how he could know that he should ever be glorified."

The hope which the Christian entertains, accords with that Article [Art. XIII.] of our doctrinal series, which relates to the resurrection, the judgment, and the retributions of eternity. Strike that doctrine from the system, and his hope would vanish: "If in this life only we have hope," said the apostle, "we are of all men most miserable." The Christian's hope is fastened on God and heaven; and when he arrives in heaven, his hope will become fruition. None can help seeing the agreement between the hope of glory, cherished in the life that now is, and its fruition in the life which is to come.

#### REMARKS.

1. What can be more consummate folly than for creatures who are to exist forever, to confine all their desires, pursuits, and anticipations, to the good things of the present life! Could the earthly good which we anticipate all be obtained, it would be wholly inadequate to satisfy creatures like ourselves, endowed with intelligent and immortal minds. But even if this world were soul-satisfying, how extremely short is the time in which it can be enjoyed. And what a fearful drawback must it be to the satisfaction with which we heap up earthly treasures, to be reminded that "this night" our souls may be required of us;

and then whose shall all these things be? "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." To confine our hopes and pursuits to temporal good, is to degrade ourselves to the rank of mere animals,—creatures whose existence reaches not beyond the boundaries of time. O, why will beings, made for eternity, thus degrade themselves! Surely man, rational, immortal man, ought not to labor for the wind. Eccl. v. 16. He is susceptible of better and more enduring enjoyments than earth can furnish him. "He builds too low, who builds beneath the skies."

2. With this Article of the experimental system before us, we see that God is not regardless of the comfort of his children, even while they remain in this world of trial. He has not yet put them in possession of their inheritance; they are still in the wilderness; but it is the way to the land of promise. From that good land they receive, even now, some clusters to refresh them; but these, instead of satiating their appetite, serve rather as provocatives of hunger, and as a foretaste of that eternal feast at which they shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven. "We are saved by hope." Did not the hopes of Christians reach beyond the grave, they would often be more wretched than other men; since their religion not unfrequently occasions their enduring greater privations and more fiery trials. But with them, it is no uncommon thing to enjoy the most, when their sufferings are the greatest. Tribulation increases their patience, and patience their experience, and experience their hope. They have not merely submitted to persecutions, but have taken *joyfully* the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they have in heaven a better and more enduring substance. A hope, however distant, of the eternal enjoyment of Christ in heaven, would be more supporting to the mind of the Christian, than any prospect of earthly good, however near. But the Christian's heaven is not very distant. Those words which the Savior addressed to the penitent thief, will nearly apply to every other penitent, "*To-day* shalt thou be with me in paradise."

3. We are led to remark, that, according as it is well or ill-founded, a hope of heaven is either the best or the worst thing that a man can possibly possess. He who has a well-grounded hope of the heavenly inheritance, however destitute he may be in other respects, is a highly favored man. But he whose hope is confident and yet spurious, ought to be looked upon as being in an unspeakably wretched condition. It is not improbable that many a man, who is heard to say, "I have a hope I would not give up for the world," would, nevertheless, act the part of wisdom to give it up without reward, and that immediately; for his hope may be the greatest hindrance in the way of his salvation. There is more prospect of the conversion of a thoughtless sinner, than of the self-deceived hypocrite; especially if his hope has been cherished for a length of time.

4. Notwithstanding a good hope is so valuable, it should not be our first business to acquire it. Our first aim should be, to possess that character which will warrant us to indulge a hope. Should a man spend his life in religious services, merely for the sake of establishing a hope of heaven, he would not succeed; at least he would not in this way acquire a hope which would be like an anchor to the soul, both



sure and steadfast. A sinner can repent, believe, and pray, before he has a hope ; but he can have no well-grounded hope, till he exercises repentance and faith, and draws near to God in prayer. And the only way a Christian can strengthen his hope, is to grow in grace, and the knowledge of his Savior. Should he at any time suspend all active efforts in the cause of Christ, and set himself down to the business of getting his hope confirmed, he would find himself obliged to resume his labors, as the necessary means for accomplishing his object. The apostle Peter first exhorts his Christian brethren to give all diligence to add to their faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity ; and then exhorts them, in doing these things, to give diligence to make their calling and election sure. 2 Pet. i. 5—11.

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## ARTICLE VII.

HUMILITY CONSTITUTES A TRAIT IN THE CHARACTER OF ALL GOD'S FRIENDS, WHETHER SINLESS ANGELS OR REDEEMED MEN ; BUT BELONGING TO THE LATTER WITH PECULIAR APPROPRIATENESS.

THIS is an affection which can be exercised only by *creatures*. Although holiness stands opposed to *pride* in every being, and therefore the holiest of all beings must be at an infinite remove from such an affection ; yet it can hardly be proper to say of Him, before whom "all nations are as nothing," that He is *humble*. His condescension is infinite ; but humbleness of mind is an attribute peculiar to a limited and dependent being. It implies the conviction such a one has of his comparative unworthiness of regard ; that he considers himself a mere speck in the creation, and, compared with his Creator, as less than nothing and vanity. It was in the exercise of a humble frame of mind, that David exclaimed, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained ; what is man that thou art mindful of him ! and the son of man that thou visitest him !"

Humility lays no obligation on any being to entertain a false opinion of himself. All it requires is, that no one should "think of himself more highly than he ought to think." Rom. xii. 3. If we place no higher estimate upon ourselves than others might safely place, or than truth warrants, we do not subject ourselves to the imputation of pride. As, therefore, the infinite God can not think of himself more highly than he ought, it is not possible that he should be proud.

Humility, in the opinion of some, is not only peculiar to creatures, but to creatures that have sinned. This view of the matter seems to

make it differ but little, if any, from repentance. Did humility necessarily include *shame* and *self-aborrence*, it would be an affection restricted to fallen creatures; for there is nothing shameful in mere dependence. The seraphims, standing before God with covered feet and veiled faces, are humble in view, not of conscious vileness, but of their dependence and comparative insignificance. They feel that the distance between them and the Supreme Being is immense; that they are creatures, and He their Creator; that they are entirely dependent, and He all-sufficient; that they are of yesterday, and know nothing, while He is from everlasting and knows all things; and that his *holiness* as much surpasses theirs, as does his greatness.

While the holy angels have but one reason for the exercise of humility, namely, their being *creatures*, dependent and infinitely inferior to their Creator, we have this additional reason for it,—that we are *sinner*s. In the scale of intelligence, we rank far above the brutes; but sin has, in a sense, sunk us far below them. They are not susceptible of such degradation as that into which we have fallen. The beasts can not debase themselves “even unto hell;” but such debasement is charged on the children of Adam. Isa. lvii. 9. There is nothing in the universe so debasing as sin. Nothing, therefore, should so humble us before God, as the thought that *we have sinned against Heaven, and in his sight*. “And there” (said the God of Israel to his people) “shall ye remember your ways and your doings wherein ye have been defiled, and ye shall lothe yourselves in your own sight.” Ezek. xx. 43.

If, in beholding the inmates of a prison, we should chance to be reminded of some deed of our own, equal in turpitude to those which these convicts had perpetrated, would it not be a humbling reflection, that their punishment was no more than what we ourselves deserved? Imprisonment in hell is infinitely more dreadful and ignominious than confinement in any earthly prison; and that imprisonment we have all richly merited.

If their iniquities had been marked, hell would have been the everlasting abode of the saints in light. The glories of the heavenly state will not erase from their minds a conviction of their demerit. They will feel that, even now, they deserve to be cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Even their songs of praise, extolling as they will the grace displayed in their salvation, and thus reminding them of their former vileness and exposure to ruin, will operate powerfully to keep alive in their bosoms a spirit of humility.

Since humility is the reverse of pride, its nature and preciousness will be better apprehended, by viewing it in contrast with its moral opposite.

Pride makes a man think of himself more highly than he ought to think. The proud man resembles a bubble, made large only by inflation, and whose superficies is altogether disproportioned to its solid contents. Such a man is said to be *puffed up*. Col. ii. 18. Humility tends to remove this inflation, and reduce him to his own proper size. “Charity is *not puffed up* ;” that is, the converted man, as such, is not a proud man. 1 Cor. xiii. 4. He does not fancy himself a none-such; but is conscious of his own defects, both natural and moral. There

are times when he shrinks into his own littleness; willing to be a *creature*, infinitely less than his Creator, and absolutely dependent on Him. The convert is still capable of being proud; yes, of being proud of his humility: but this again lays him low before God. The writer of the Gospel Sonnets manifested a deep acquaintance with the Christian's heart, when he said,

"Humility doth make my pride to grow,  
And pride aspiring brings me low."

Pride may have a fall, yet not fall into the valley of humiliation. A proud man may be greatly *mortified*, and still retain all the pride of his heart. This was strikingly illustrated in the case of wicked Haman. Est. vi. 12.

Pride is not only puffed up, but also vaunteth itself. The proud man is a boaster. "Is not this great Babylon that *I* have built?" Dan. iv. 30. It is the nature of humility to counteract boasting. When Paul was obliged, out of regard to his apostolic character, to say many things in his own commendation, he appeared to do it with reluctance. "I am," said he, "become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me." 2 Cor. xii. 11. The exploits of humility are not performed for the sake of having them blazoned abroad.

Pride leads God's creatures to rebel against his government; but humility effectually prevents it. When the apostle offers this reason against putting a novice into the ministry, "Lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the *devil*," it supposes pride to have been the cause of the devil's condemnation. The same thing is intimated, when it is said concerning the fallen angels, that they "kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation." 1 Tim. iii. 6. Jude, ver. 5. The sinless angels have remained humble, and therefore contented with their place as dependent subjects of the eternal King. Where a spirit of humility is cherished, a revolt from the holy and rightful sovereignty of God is rendered impossible.

Pride fosters a spirit of impatience; while the reverse is true concerning humility. Says the wise man, "The *patient* in spirit is better than the *proud* in spirit." Here pride, the opposite of humility, is made the opposite of patience also: hence the inference, that patience and humility are very closely allied. And what Christian is there, who has not found, by his own experience, that humility is the proper soil for the growth of patience?

Pride is contentious; but humility is a peaceable and peace-making spirit. An inspired proverb declares, "*Only* by pride cometh contention." It can not be doubted that all war, whether between nations or individuals, owes its origin, in a greater or less degree, to a spirit of pride; and that were this spirit annihilated, contentions would cease, and the implements of war and bloodshed be converted into those of husbandry.

It is the nature of pride to be disdainful; but humility is condescending. In the following passage, the *scorners* and the *lowly* are contrasted: "Surely he scorneth the scorners; but he giveth grace unto the lowly." Prov. iii. 34. When the apostle (Rom. xii. 16,) says, "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate," it clearly implies, that pride is not condescending, but disdainful. But to a humble



spirit condescension is perfectly natural. This attractive feature appeared to great advantage in the Lord of glory, when he tabernacled in the flesh. He was ready to wash the feet of his disciples, or to perform any other kind office, which their necessities, or those of other men, required.

The same spirit of pride which is disdainful towards inferiors, is envious towards superiors; but humility stands as much opposed to envy as to scorning. Pride is at the foundation of envy, and "envy is the rottenness of the bones." Humility is willing to give honor to whom honor is due. As far as this spirit prevails, it will keep a man from desiring office, either in church or state, for the sake of its honor. If it be not a place where he can do more to glorify God and benefit his fellow men, he desires it not. Let a spirit of humility pervade this nation, and it would have the effect to prevent our offices, both civil and ecclesiastical, from being filled with improper characters. By proud, aspiring men, civil and religious liberty have been subverted; and from the same cause they are still in danger.

It is pride, and not humility, which produces covetousness. Why does that man, who has no desire to do good with his property, crave more than he can possibly use? Eccl. iv. 8. It is because it gratifies his pride to be rich; "to join house to house, and lay field to field, till there be no place, that he may be placed alone in the midst of the earth." Isa. v. 8. Humility will not make a man idle or neglectful of his business; but it counteracts that spirit of covetousness which the scripture denominates "the love of money—the root of all evil." Had not humility taken the place of pride in the heart of Paul, he never could have learned that difficult lesson of entire contentment in the midst of poverty. Philip. iv. 11, 12.

Pride either causes a total neglect of religion, or turns our religion into self-righteousness. "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God." Ps. x. 4. Though irreligion may be the more common effect of pride, yet religion, when it is of the pharisaic kind, proceeds from the same source. Humility stands equally opposed to irreligion and self-righteousness. To a humble creature, nothing can appear a more reasonable service than religion; and nothing more unreasonable than that religion which is of a self-sufficient and self-righteous character. Since no creature can offer to God anything save that which he has first received from him, and since God's name is exalted above all blessing and praise, the creature has no cause to be proud of his most costly offerings or his most perfect devotions. If a holy angel has nothing to boast of, how can man be just with God? man, who drinketh in iniquity like water? Surely, that man who is of a contrite and humble spirit, will feel that none of his performances are meritorious, or even worthy of being accepted for their own sake; since no one of them comes up to that perfection which God requires.

From the survey which we have now taken of the nature and effects of humility, we proceed to show, that such an affection is indispensable to genuine religion.

1. Those whom God hears, and to whom he imparts his grace, in other words, the truly religious, are characterized in the scriptures as

being humble. This will be seen by the following passages. "He forgetteth not the cry of the *humble*." Ps. ix. 12. "Forget not the *humble*. Lord thou hast heard the desire of the *humble*." Ps. x. 12, 17. "The *humble* shall hear thereof and be glad." Ps. xxxiv. 2. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the *humble*." Jam. iv. 6. To none who are without humility, is there any promise that their desires shall be heard, or that grace shall be communicated to them. The inference is undeniable, that all true saints possess a humble spirit.

2. That humility is essential to the character of the godly, is made evident by what the scriptures say concerning the *proud*. These are always classed with the wicked. "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." 1 Pet. v. 5. Here, all whom God resists, and to whom he does not give grace, are distinguished from the saints by their pride. "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord." Prov. xvi. 5. But the saints are not an abomination to the Lord: they are his hidden ones—his dear children; therefore they are not proud in heart; and if not proud, they must of necessity be humble. In the last chapter in the Old Testament, all the proud and all that do wickedly, are contrasted with such as fear God's name: but if those who fear God's name were not, every man of them, humble, there would be no distinctive feature in their character to throw them into a different class from the wicked, who are proud.

3. Christ declares humility to be so identified with the genius and spirit of his religion, that there can be no consistent Christianity without it. When he invites us to learn of him, (that is, to become his disciples,) he tells us that he is meek and lowly in heart; intimating by this, that short of possessing a meek and lowly heart, we can never become his disciples. In the first sentence of his sermon on the mount, he teaches the necessity of humility. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matt. v. 3. When Jesus was asked the question, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" he called a little child and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matt. xviii. 1—3. By this significant illustration he designed to teach them, that humility was essential for obtaining, not only eminence in, but even admission to, the kingdom of heaven. He repeatedly told his disciples that every one that exalted himself should be abased, while he that humbled himself should be exalted. Luke xiv. 11; xviii. 14. The same sentiment is taught in this proverb; "Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honor is humility." Prov. xviii. 12. In the religion of the Old Testament, as well as that of the New, humility is made an essential ingredient. Whether in Jew or gentile, bond or free, there can be no true religion without it. Were it possible for a man to possess every other grace of the Spirit, and be entirely destitute of this, he would not be truly amiable.

Some may wish to know, whether every humble man is a Christian. If he be truly humble, most assuredly he is a Christian. That there can be no genuine humility without religion, is a proposition no less

true than its converse, that without humility there can be no genuine religion. There is something, however, in the mental constitution and the demeanor of certain men, which, while it somewhat resembles, is yet essentially unlike Christian humility. This *something* we shall, for want of a better name, denominate constitutional humility. However amiable and becoming it may appear, it does not beget in its possessor a conviction of his own vileness and insignificance. It owes its origin, not to a consciousness of dependence and ill-desert, but to constitutional timidity and self-distrust. Whatever may be the natural tempers of the unregenerate, they are all, in the language of scripture, *proud* men. And, assuredly, all true converts, however much constitutional humility they might have had, become convinced that they were very far from being truly humble.

There is a counterfeit humility which appears in the experience of false converts; but in reality it is nothing better than pride, aping this precious grace of the Spirit. The counterfeit, in particular things, seems to be more humble than humility itself. Paul denominates it a *voluntary* humility; by which he intimates, that the subjects of it seem desirous of going beyond what is required of them. See Col. ii. 18—23. This voluntary humility has led to the worship of angels, and the spirits of dead men; and even to the worship of men while tabernacling in clay. What a show of humility has been made by the devotees of Rome, in giving to the pope (“the man of sin”) those honors which belong only to God. Counterfeit humility is not confined to the church of Rome, nor to that worship which is paid to saints and angels, and to the pretended successor of St. Peter. We may kneel, or even fall on our faces before God, and yet be wholly under the influence of pride in so doing.

There is an affection resembling humility, which is the result of overpowering displays of the divine majesty. In this sense, the whole congregation of the children of Israel were humbled, when they stood at the foot of mount Sinai, witnessing the manifestations of Jehovah’s power. But a vast majority of them were blind to the beauty of his holiness: nor did they, in any proper sense, feel their own littleness as creatures, or their vileness as sinners. Such humility is common to awakened sinners, when they are under those convictions of guilt which are forced upon their consciences by the precepts and penalties of the law. While in this state, there are times when they seem to be quite abased; but they are all the while strangers to true lowliness of mind. That humility which forms a part of the Christian’s experience, is the fruit of the Spirit: it brings down the proud imaginations of the heart, and the Lord alone is exalted. Let him be exalted! is the language of every humble creature, both on earth and in heaven.

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

First. I shall now reverse the order which I have before pursued, by first showing the harmony between this branch of experience and the *doctrinal* system.

Humility is in harmony with the *first* Article of that system, name-



ly, the existence of an infinitely great and holy God. Pride says in its heart, (if not with its mouth,) "There is no God." Ps. xiv. 1. It is an affection which spurns control, and therefore quarrels with the doctrine that there is an omnipotent Being, who exercises absolute control throughout the universe. Humility, on the contrary, is in sweet and perfect accordance with that doctrinal truth.

The *second* doctrine of the series exhibits God as creating and governing all things for his own glory. The humble man looks on the whole created universe as belonging to God, and under his constant providential control; and in this he rejoices. He sees it to be altogether suitable that the glory of the infinite Being should be made the ultimate object of pursuit, both by himself and all his intelligent creatures. But a universe made and governed for such an end, is not suited to please the creature whose heart is filled with pride.

The *third* Article of doctrine exhibits the Creator in the character of a Moral Governor, giving a perfect law to the whole of his intelligent creation. Pride says, "*I know not the Lord, neither will I obey his voice—I will submit to no such restraint.*" On the contrary, humility inquires, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" If the right to govern belongs to the Creator, then a humble spirit becomes his creatures; for this is the only spirit which will cordially submit to be governed.

Man's apostacy and entire sinfulness is the subject matter of the *next* Article. A proud spirit will lead us either to dispute the truth of this doctrine, or to treat it with contemptuous levity. On the contrary, a humble spirit will cause us fully to credit the divine testimony concerning the existence, extent, and inexcusableness of human depravity. And this doctrine, with which humility has such an entire agreement, exerts a mightier influence than aught besides, in giving this virtue a deep and abiding hold on the heart.

The doctrine of atonement, which stands next in order, supposes all men to be moral bankrupts, unable to pay the least farthing of that infinite debt which they have incurred, and, so long as they are under the dominion of pride, obstinately refusing to accept of a surety. They either deny the claim which justice makes upon them, or fancy they shall be able to discharge it themselves. But as soon as humility takes the place of pride, the atonement is seen to be, not only a scriptural doctrine, but one which excels in glory. The influence it exerts in exalting God, and abasing the pride of man, makes it peculiarly attractive to the humble soul.

Passing over the *sixth, seventh, and eighth* Articles, with which humility can manifestly have no disagreement, it may be well just to notice how entirely it accords with *sovereign grace* in the renovation of the sinner's heart, *unconditional election*, and *free justification* through the atonement and advocacy of a Mediator,—the three doctrines which follow next in order. These doctrines have great affinity to each other: they have a common character, and are adapted to please a humble heart, and no other. They represent all the blood-washed throng as being called with a holy calling, yet not by reason of any merit on their part; as chosen not on account of their holiness, but unto holiness; and as justified, even after their partaking of the divine

nature, on account of a righteousness not their own. Such doctrines may be adopted into the creed of a proud man, but there is nothing short of a humbled spirit which will give them a cordial reception. Were the Christian's heart perfectly humble, he would be altogether disgusted with doctrines of an opposite character; since they imply a sufficiency or worthiness in fallen man, which a heaven-born spirit is prepared to say does not exist.

The certain perseverance of the saints in holiness, effected by the agency of the Spirit, and secured by the promises made in Christ, is a doctrine adapted to please him who is truly humble. Though it supposes great and persevering efforts, on the part of the saints, to be absolutely necessary to their salvation, still it represents the grace of God in Christ to be the only thing which insures such efforts, and crowns them with success. This doctrine drives us out of all dependence on our own strength and good resolutions, and teaches us to depend on God alone. With this, and no other view of things, does humility accord. A humble spirit is not averse to exertion, but it sees no foundation on which to rest its hopes, except the promise of the all-sufficient God.

There is a harmony between the spirit of humility and the *thirteenth* doctrinal Article. No man, save one whose pride has been subdued, can be willing to appear at the judgment bar, and there have his character disclosed. Without a perfection of humility, such a disclosure would be distressing, even to those who have escaped condemnation. Neither could the saints, without humble hearts, bear that high honor which will be conferred on them in being admitted to reign with Christ in glory.

Between humility and the *last* Article in the doctrinal series, there is an entire agreement. The doctrine exhibited in that Article does not ascribe to God any more absolute control of the universe, than what is willingly ascribed to him by all such as are imbued with a humble spirit. It is the language of pride, Let *me* be consulted—let *me* plan—let *me* direct and execute. But humility not only consents to, but rejoices in, God's supremacy, both in planning and executing; saying, Let Him work all things after the counsel of his own will.

Secondly. Humility is in harmony with all the other parts of the *experimental* system.

It was shown that pure benevolence, the *first* Article in Christian experience, reduces self to its own place, and gives a new importance to its neighbor's welfare. With an affection so disinterested and amiable, the feelings of the humble man are in perfect accordance.

Delight in holy characters is the subject of our *second* experimental Article. Let humility be mingled with the love of complacency, and it will lead us to esteem others better than ourselves, and to prefer them in honor, when they manifest a greater degree of holiness.

Our *third* experimental Article displays the excellency of a reconciled, submissive spirit; and such a spirit is manifestly humble, and not proud. In scripture, submission and humility are so nearly synonymous terms, that the one is sometimes used for the other. When we are exhorted to *humble* ourselves under the mighty hand of God, we

are, in effect, exhorted to exercise submission to his holy will ; and this we shall not fail to do, if we become humble.

The *next* Article in the experimental series relates to repentance. Between that grace and humility there is so great an affinity, that they are very commonly classed together. God is said to “dwell with him that is of a *contrite* and *humble* spirit, to revive the spirit of the *humble*, and to revive the heart of the *contrite* ones.” Isa. lvii. 15. See also Isa. lxvi. 2.

Faith, which comes *next* in our series, is that branch of a Christian’s experience, in which, renouncing all self-dependence, he relies solely on God for strength and righteousness ; and surely, to enable him thus to do, requires a spirit of humility.

Hope and humility are not discordant graces. The Christian may, without any inconsistency, feel that he deserves the lowest hell, and yet hope, yea expect, to be received to the highest heaven ; since he has for his encouragement, the promise of that God who is rich in grace and glorious in power.

#### REMARKS.

1. In view of the contrast which has been drawn between pride and humility, who can avoid seeing that every proud creature in the universe ought immediately to become humble ? Had Pharaoh not been proud, he would not, when required to let Israel go, that they might serve the Lord their God, have replied, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice, to let Israel go ?” If Haman had not been proud, he would not have plotted the destruction of the whole Jewish nation, because one of their number refused to do him reverence. Had Herod not been proud, he would not have massacred all the infants in Bethlehem, in order to rid himself of one who, he imagined, might one day dispute with him the title to regal authority. Who can help but see, in such cases as these, the unreasonableness and unspeakable vileness of pride ? Were not these proud men under obligations to possess an entirely different spirit ? And why should not all the proud abase themselves before God ? The mass of men have not such an opportunity of acting out their pride, as had those individuals to whom I have just referred. But God may see a Pharaoh, a Haman, or a Herod, in many a man who never sat on, or even saw a throne. And in his sight pride has the same hateful nature, whether in peasant or prince.

2. An acquaintance with the nature of humility will enable us to see why it is, that he who has made the greatest attainments in holiness, has the deepest sense of his own littleness and ill-desert. The eminent Christian has a more thorough knowledge of God’s character and his own, than one of inferior piety has ; and this serves to *apparently* widen the distance between himself and God, and thus to deepen his humility. Could all believers have those clear discoveries of the excellent greatness of Jehovah, which Job had when he said, “but now mine eye seeth thee,” they would have a far less exalted opinion of themselves.

Too much pains can not be taken to cultivate a humble spirit.—



Through the valley of humility lies the Christian's safest path to heaven. In my youth, I heard a godly minister, when speaking on this subject, utter a sentiment which I have never forgotten. Said he, "What a barren thing is pride!—and nothing is so fruitful as humility." Could the Christian always preserve a humble frame of mind, he could pray without ceasing; he could, without interruption, hold high converse with Heaven. There is, probably, no one thing which more frequently interrupts his communion with God, than pride. Often will he apply to his own case, those lines of Watts:

" 'Tis pride, that busy sin,  
Spoils all that I perform;  
Curs'd pride, that creeps securely in,  
And swells a haughty worm."

God can have no communion with us, when we are swollen with pride. Before honor, especially this highest of all honors, is humility.

3. Is there not reason to believe, that the humility of a redeemed sinner will exceed that of an angel? He not only has two motives for its exercise where the angel has but one, but the motive which is peculiar to him, is much the stronger of the two. The saint and the angel are both creatures, infinitely inferior to their Creator, and wholly dependent on him for all they have and are. This constitutes a reason for humility, which is common to both. But the saint has a reason peculiar to himself; he was once a rebel, in arms against the Majesty of heaven. He once possessed a character indescribably vile, and which rendered him justly obnoxious to the torments of hell. The recollection of this, (a recollection to which an angel must forever be a stranger,) will cause him to exercise humility more profound, probably, than that of angels. He, in whose view there is a peculiar blessedness in humility, will rejoice in this result, however undesirable and (on his part) blameworthy have been the means of producing it. It was doubtless in view of the great advantage, in point of humility, which the redeemed will have over angels, that a certain mother in our American Israel (as I have been informed) was heard to say, "I had rather be a sinner saved by Jesus Christ, than to be a holy angel."

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## ARTICLE VIII.

**A HUNGERING AND THIRSTING AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS, OR A DESIRE FOR INCREASED ATTAINMENTS IN HOLINESS, IS EXPERIENCED BY ALL GENUINE CHRISTIANS.**

**HUNGER** and thirst imply the existence of appetite; and whatever the appetite craves is desired, not only for the sake of its salutary effects, but also for the pleasure it gives to the sense of tasting. The mind has appetite as well as the body; and the mental, no less than

the physical appetite, relishes the objects of its desire. A hunger and thirst after righteousness supposes that *moral good*, by whatever name it may be called, is the food which the heart relishes for its intrinsic deliciousness—its perfect adaptation to gratify the spiritual taste. This appetite for moral good, is never felt by unregenerate men. Such may indeed have an intellectual apprehension of the superior excellence and safety of holiness, as compared with sin : they may even manifest a great desire to obtain religion ; but they are strangers to that relish for holiness which the Christian experiences—they do not hunger and thirst after righteousness. Their desire for religion, instead of resembling a hungry man's desire for food, may be compared to a sick man's anxiety to take medicine, the taste of which he hates, but without the operation of which, he feels that he must die.

Nor does a relish for holiness have any place in the religion of *false converts*. Some of them, satisfied with their supposed conversion, make no effort to obtain, in their subsequent experiences, evidence of its genuineness. Others, who are equally destitute of grace, may desire a continuance of their religious experiences ; for if men can receive the word with joy, when in reality it has taken no root in their hearts, they may also desire to have that joy continued and augmented. But this is certain, that no false convert ever had or can have, the least appetite for holiness. Nature never thirsts after grace ; for the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. They whose hearts the Spirit has renovated, are the only ones in our world that truly hunger and thirst after righteousness. Among these, there is a difference as to the keenness of their relish for holiness, and the intensity of their desires after greater attainments in it ; but such a relish and such desires are common to them all. To establish the truth of this part of the experimental system, viz. that a hungering and thirsting after righteousness is one characteristic of all the truly religious, we need only to consider the following things :

1. There are none of the subjects of grace on earth, who attain to sinless perfection ; there is therefore ample room for increasing attainments. As this position is, to some extent, disputed, I shall here endeavor to establish its correctness.

1st. That none of the saints on earth attain to a sinless state, is proved by direct assertions of scripture. Not only does it say, "There is no man that sinneth not ;" but what is more directly in point, it asserts that "there is not a *just* man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not." The question that it puts, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" amounts to as full a proof that no one can with truth say this, as if it had made a direct assertion to that effect. 1 Kin. viii. 46. Eccl. vii. 20. Prov. xx. 9.

2d. The sacred biography very naturally leads us to the conclusion, that none of the subjects of grace, while on earth, attain to sinless perfection. Abraham, the father of all them that believe, is not represented as a sinless character. See Gen. xii. 13 ; xx. 16. What a distinguished saint was Moses. He was favored with the most intimate communion with God, and is declared to have been meek above all other men : but this grace, in which he excelled, he did not possess to perfection. At the waters of strife, he was even so angered, that he

spake unadvisedly with his lips. Ps. cvi. 32, 33. The apostles, those eminently holy men, are represented as sinfully defective, both before and after the ascension of their Lord. Luke ix. 41, 46, 54, 55. Acts xv. 39. Gal. ii. 11—13.

3d. The case of Paul deserves a distinct notice. It is of itself a sufficient proof, that there is no man on earth that sinneth not. He was not a whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles. The scriptures represent him as a saint of the very first magnitude. Nor are we led to think more meanly of his attainments, on account of his styling himself less than the least of all saints. And what did this pre-eminently pious man say of himself, touching the point in question? "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." Rom. vii. 23. Again he said, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." Phil. iii. 12. It was more than thirty years after his conversion, that he told the Philippians he was not already perfect. Had he afterwards attained to perfection, he doubtless would have informed his brethren of the fact; for unless he did so, they would be very apt to construe what he had said into an apostolic assertion, that no saints, while on earth, are wholly without sin.

4th. The language which the scriptures hold concerning the character of *their* religion, who imagine they have attained to perfection, is full proof that none actually attain to that state. Job declares, "If I say I am perfect, it shall prove me perverse." With this agree the words of the apostle John: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness." They say, "Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou: these are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day." Job ix. 20. 1 John, i. 8. Prov. xxx. 12. Isa. lxxv. 5. From the passages now cited, it is evident that all those who lay claim to perfection are perverse; that the truth is not in them; that they are not washed from their filthiness; but are proud, self-conceited hypocrites.

5th. The contrast which the scriptures make between the earthly and heavenly states of the saints, is another proof of the imperfection of their earthly state. "The path of the just," says the Spirit of inspiration, "is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Prov. iv. 18. The changes of darkness and light which are every day made by the revolution of the earth, are here introduced to illustrate the Christian's progress in religion. His unregenerate state is illustrated by the total darkness of night; his regeneration, by the dawn of morning; and his heavenly state, by the risen sun, the perfect day. The time that elapses between the dawn and the perfect day, during which the darkness is gradually diminishing, represents the whole of his religious course upon earth. Never is it perfect day with him, until he arrives in heaven. In accordance with this representation, the apostle calls the souls of believers in their heavenly state, "the spirits of just men made perfect;" intimating that while they were embodied, they were not made perfect.



**Objection.** An apostle has declared, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin because he is born of God." What, short of sinless perfection, (it will be asked,) is taught in this passage? If the expressions "doth not commit sin," and "cannot sin," be understood to mean the same which is now meant by sinless perfection, it would make this text teach what is believed by no one; no, not by the objector himself. It would teach that every individual, experiencing the new birth, does from the moment of the change become a sinless character, beyond the possibility of ever doing another sinful action, or even indulging another selfish affection: and this would apply to all antecedent conversions, as much as to those which should subsequently take place. There is no intimation that it refers to the future, any more than to the past. None will deny that the scriptures represent some men as sinfully imperfect, who had, nevertheless, been truly born of God. We are all, therefore, whatever may be our sentiments on the subject in question, under an absolute necessity of understanding the expression "doth not commit sin," to mean something less than sinless perfection. Nor are we driven to any unnatural explanation of this phrase, when we consider it as designed simply to teach, that the true convert lives a holy life in distinction from a wicked one; and that this is the natural result of that work of grace, which the Spirit of God stands pledged to sustain in his heart.

Perhaps some objector will say, I grant that, in Bible times, the saints were not sinlessly perfect; but now a new dispensation has commenced, when every one who is born into the kingdom of God, is born a perfect Christian, and is no longer liable to commit sin. We would ask, where is the proof of a new dispensation with this distinctive feature? Is it pretended that there is a new revelation from God, by which we are to learn what is the character of this, in distinction from the former generations of his children?

Having stated some of the leading arguments, which prove that none of the children of God on earth attain to sinless perfection, I proceed to show,

2. That such perfection is what they all desire and seek after. It is the mark towards which they are pressing. Some are pressing forward with greater zeal than others; but there is not an individual among them all, who aims at anything less than absolute perfection. That this is their aim, is made evident by the following considerations:

(1.) Perfection is no more than what God requires of them, as appears by such injunctions as these: "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." 1 Pet. i. 15. Matt. v. 48. These commands are to be understood in an unrestricted sense. God is gracious, and *bears* with his children, notwithstanding their many imperfections: but he is also of purer eyes than to behold evil, and does not sanction, or allow of, the least of their transgressions. If they love his law, (and this they do, for he has written it in their hearts,) they can not do less than to seek an entire conformity to its holy precepts. They are described as those who have respect unto all his commandments, and who esteem his

precepts concerning all things to be right. They find no fault with God for requiring perfect holiness. So far from this, it is their longing desire and their untiring aim, to be wholly freed from the dominion of sin.

(2.) That the children of God aim at perfection, is proved by that repentance which they exercise, in view of their smallest deviations from his perfect law. They repent of all the sins, however small, of which they are conscious. They hate every false way; every *vain thought*, as well as every wicked action. Ps. cxix. 113, 128. The evil which they do, they allow not; and the good that they fail of doing, they had purposed to do. Rom. vii. 15, 16. The struggle which is going on in the breast of every Christian, proves two things; viz. that *he has not attained to perfection*, and yet that *he greatly desires it*.

(3.) Since I have made a distinct mention of the experience of Paul, to help establish the position, that all Christians are imperfect, I will now refer to it for proof, that entire deliverance from sin is what they all desire and aim at. It is evident that Paul longed to be wholly disenthralled from the bondage of sin. His language is very emphatic: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" After certifying the Philippians that he had not already attained to perfection, he assures them that this was the mark towards which he was constantly pressing. Phil. iii. 13, 14. Here we have an experience, which is given as a pattern by which to try our own. If, with Paul, we earnestly desire and seek a perfection of holiness, and feel humbled in view of our great deficiency therein, we may conclude that our religion is genuine. We have now seen that the saints are not wholly exempt from sin, and yet that such exemption is what they all aspire to. I now proceed to show,

3. How the conflicting principles of nature and grace, which co-exist in their hearts, unitedly stimulate them to seek after higher attainments in holiness. The grace that is in them, gives them a relish for holiness, and a loathing of sin. When they discover the good work which God has begun in their hearts, they can not but long, in view of its amiable nature, to see it perfected: and when they discover those remaining corruptions which defile their souls, and grieve the Spirit of God, they sigh for deliverance. Paul, in his epistle to the Philippians, discourses as though a relish for holiness was the exciting cause of his efforts to make advances therein; while in his epistle to the Romans, he seems prompted to those efforts by a restlessness under the burden of indwelling sin. The two representations are entirely harmonious; for in proportion to the intensity of our hunger and thirst after righteousness, will be our uneasiness under our remaining corruptions. When these get the ascendancy, they impede our progress and paralyze our efforts; but when the work of grace revives, we have a deeper conviction of the vileness of sin, and this gives a new impulse to our zeal in seeking its entire expulsion from the soul.\*

\* As some suppose that the apostle, in the seventh chapter of Romans, is describing the mental conflict that takes place before regeneration, I shall suggest some reasons against this supposition, and in favor of the more commonly received one, namely, that his language there, is descriptive of the *Christian warfare*. It is worthy of notice, that from the 7th verse to the end of the chapter, the apostle appears to be giving us an ac-

4. That a desire for increasing attainments in holiness belongs to the experience of all true believers, may be learned from those passages, where they, in distinction from the ungodly and hypocrites, are described as *empty*, instead of being full; and as having their appetite kept up, and not cloyed. This characteristic of the godly is noticed in Mary's song, when she says, "He hath filled the *hungry* with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away." Luke i. 53. With this agree the words of the psalmist: "For he satisfieth the *longing* soul, and filleth the *hungry* soul with goodness." Ps. cvii. 9. The false converts at Laodicea, whose religion was so offensive to Christ, were not empty, but full. In their own estimation, they "were rich

count of his own religious experiences. The spirit of inspiration led him to adopt this method, as the one best calculated to acquaint us with the nature of experimental religion. His experience was genuine, and is exhibited as a standard by which ours is to be tried. Let us now examine this standard somewhat minutely.

1. Paul begins by giving us a brief account of his conversion, comprehending his unawakened and convicted states. Ver. 7—11. In his unawakened state, sin was dead, and he was alive. But when the commandment came, conviction ensued, sin revived, and this effected his death;—not death *in* sin, (this he had before,) but death *to* sin, and to all hopes of being justified by the law.

2. After thus concisely describing the wonderful influence which the law had exerted, in acquainting him with the depravity of his heart, and in effecting his death, he goes on to express the highest approbation of that very law. "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just and good." What better evidence can be given of conversion, than such approving views of the law of God?

3. In the account the apostle gives of the time when sin was dead, and when, by the coming of the commandment, sin revived, and he died, he uniformly uses the *past* tense; but throughout the rest of the chapter, he speaks of the conflict he has, in the present tense. From this we naturally infer, that he is there describing his *present* exercises; in other words, the warfare with indwelling sin, which, during his whole life, the Christian has to wage.

4. That the conflict of which Paul speaks could not be designed to represent his own or any other man's unregenerate exercises, is evident from the consideration, that no unregenerated man ever has such a conflict, or entertains such views in relation to the *evil of sin*. Paul speaks of sin as what he *would not*; that is, what he was unwilling to do—what he *allowed not*—and what he even *hated*. Ver. 15, 16. If there ever was a period in his life, when he supposed that unregenerated minds could have such an aversion to sin as he here describes, that period had gone by long before he wrote this epistle.

5. While this conflict is going on, the apostle declares concerning the evil which he commits, "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." Ver. 17. Let this declaration be applied to him as a Christian, and it makes good sense; but otherwise, and it is unintelligible. What could be meant, were a creature who has but one moral nature, and that wholly under the dominion of sin, to say concerning the evil he commits, It is not *I* that do it, but *sin* that dwelleth in me? Is there any other than a *sinful I*, that ever acts in a creature totally depraved?

6. The *parenthesis* in the 18th verse, furnishes another reason for understanding the apostle as giving us the experiences of a converted man, rather than of one that is merely convicted. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." Had he been describing an unconverted man, he would not have needed this parenthetic clause; for such a man is all flesh, and nothing else. But when a man, in whose heart the love of God is shed abroad by the Holy Ghost, confesses that in *him* there is no good thing, there is need of this parenthesis to qualify the confession he makes.

7. The declaration made in the 22d verse, "I *delight* in the law of God after the *inward man*," furnishes a two-fold argument in favor of that interpretation of the chapter, which I am advocating. If Paul had not spoken of himself as a convert, he could not have described himself as having an *inward man*. See 2 Cor. iv. 16. Nor could he, consistently with truth, have spoken of himself as *delighting* in the law: for in the next chapter he expressly says, "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can be."

8. That the conflict here spoken of by Paul, has reference to his exercises as a Christian, seems evident from what he says respecting the *two conflicting laws* which co-existed in his mind. It is described as a struggle, not between a bad heart and an enlightened conscience, but between two contrary propensities of the heart, one favoring



and increased with goods, and had need of nothing." Rev. iii. 17. While the hunger of the body is capable of being satiated, it is directly the reverse with that of the soul. In spiritual things, they who gratify their appetite most and oftenest, have the most craving desires after new supplies. They who have made the greatest attainments in holiness, are the most eager in seeking for greater. Such are represented as being still empty, and as longing for further supplies of grace. They, in distinction from the men of the world, have found a soul-satisfying good; and yet they crave more of this good. Ps. iv. 6, 7. However high their attainments in religion, they do not cease to derive encouragement from those promises, in which God has engaged to regard the prayer of the *destitute*, and to satisfy Zion's *poor* with the bread of his house. See Ps. cii. 17, and cxxxii. 15.

5. That the saints have an abiding relish for holiness, and a desire for increasing sanctification, is evident from their being characterized in scripture as a generation that *seek after God*. It is worthy of notice, that such persons as possess a similar character, whether good or bad, are in the scriptures denominated a *generation*. See Ps. xiv. 5. Prov. xxx. 11—14. One way in which men of piety, in every age of the world, manifest a sameness of character, is by *seeking after God*: therefore David, in speaking of them, says, "This is the generation of them that seek him; that seek thy face, O Jacob;" that is, O God of Jacob. Ps. xxiv. 6. An opinion has prevailed, that the expression, *seeking God*, is descriptive of those anxious feelings and efforts which precede the new birth; whereas the truth is, that those who seek after God, are, in the scriptures, distinguished from the *unregenerate*. The attention which unrenewed men give to the subject of religion, even when their anxiety rises to its highest pitch, is so utterly defective, that the scriptures have never described it as a *seeking after God*. The godly are the only men whom they recognize as *seekers*. Who but the godly can be intended in this passage? "The humble shall see this and be glad; your heart shall live that seek God." Ps. lxix. 32. Here, those who seek God are identified with the humble. Again: "Let all those that seek thee, rejoice and be glad in thee; and let such as love thy salvation, say continually, let God be magnified." Ps. lxx. 4. In this passage, we learn that those who *seek the Lord*, are such as *love his salvation*. See also Ps. ix. 10; xxvii. 8; lxiii. 1; lxix. 6; cxix. 2. Sol. Song iii. 2.

But how can it be proper, some may ask, to designate them as *seek-*

holiness, and the other sin. It is one and the same conflict with that which he describes in his epistle to the Galatians: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye can not do the things that ye would."

9. Another proof that the conflict here described, has its seat in the *Christian's* and not in the sinner's heart, is the assurance which the apostle manifested concerning its happy termination. While the war within was still going on, and he was groaning under the burden of sin, he gives thanks for the sure prospect he had of complete deliverance. Now this will apply to the war in the Christian's breast, but not to the trouble of a merely awakened and convinced sinner. The latter does not cry for deliverance from *sin*. Nor is there any promise made to him, that the dominion of sin shall ever be broken up. However distressed a sinner may be for fear of future punishment, there is no promise to relieve his distresses, so long as he continues in rebellion. But the Christian has a sure promise of victory, to sustain him in carrying on the war with his spiritual enemies.

ers after God, who have actually found him? To this I answer, that, in the first place, this appellation is with propriety applied to renewed men, because, though they have found God, there is a sense in which they are continually losing him; hence they have occasion to find him again and again. Job, who had no doubt been favored with frequent and intimate communion with God, is nevertheless heard to exclaim, "O that I knew where I might find him!" And David, who at one time could say, "My soul followeth hard after thee," at another, confesses, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep." Ps. lxxiii. 8, and cxix. 176. The spouse (that is, the Church of Christ—the household of faith,) is represented as at one time holding fast her Beloved, and refusing to let him go, and at another, as making diligent search to find him. Sol. Song, iii. 4, and v. 6—8. The scriptures furnish abundant proof that there are seasons when, by reason of their departure from him, God's people have to lament his departure from them. They feel that, in a sense, they have lost their heavenly Friend—they are greatly grieved at this loss—and they now strive diligently to find God anew. This, then, is one of the reasons why God's children are with propriety called a generation that seek his face.

Secondly. It is proper to speak of the saints as seeking after God, because, even in their nearest approaches to him, the intimacy of their communion does not reach the extent either of their obligation or desire. In a sense, they seem not yet to have found him, because their conformity to his image, and their enjoyment of his presence, fall so far short of what they wish and pray for. They feel as if it could not so properly be said of them, that they know the Lord, as that they are following on to know him. Hos. vi. 3.

If, then, they who are born of the Spirit, are the very ones whom the scriptures describe as seeking after God, it establishes the point, that an appetite for holiness must have a place in their religious experiences: for surely, they who are seeking to find and enjoy the Fountain of holiness, must have a thirst for holiness itself. And this *thirst* is the thing which distinguishes their seeking after God, from that of mere awakened sinners.\*

6. That all the godly experience spiritual hunger, and strive to make progress in the divine life, is evident from the fact, that the Bible describes them as having a great desire to enjoy divine ordinances, and the means of grace in general. That inspired volume is itself among the richest of these means. It is not only very pure, but very purifying; therefore the servants of God love it. To them it appears more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb. Ps. xix. 10. "My soul," said the psalmist, "breaketh for the longing it hath unto thy judgments (written, rather than executed judgments) at all times." Ps. cxix. 20.

\* If the question be asked, Are not the unregenerate, as well as others, *required* to seek God? the answer is, They undoubtedly are required to do this. But if the question be, *Do they seek God?* we answer, It is certain they do not. "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God." Should any say, It is an observable fact, that sinners, when awakened to a sense of their danger, do very earnestly seek after God, I would say, that this peculiar attention which they now pay to the subject of religion, is rather an evidence that God is seeking after them, than that they are seeking after him.

The public institutions of religion are rich means of sanctification ; and they are highly prized by all those who have a relish for holiness. David is not the only saint whose soul has longed and even fainted for the courts of the Lord. Ps. lxxxiv. 2. Christians prize the family altar, and still more the closet, as precious means of growth in grace. On the same account, they delight in the Sabbath. Its entire consecration to the exercises of religion and the pursuits of holiness, makes them view it as a day, which will contribute much to advance them in the knowledge and love of God ; and they hail its return with emotions of joy. They who delight in the word, the house, the day, and the ordinances of the Lord, delight also in the society of his friends ; because they reflect something of his image, and impart new courage to them in running the Christian race.

This desire to enjoy the public and private means of grace, which is experienced by all holy men, is not confined to the period of their conversion, but (as the scriptures clearly teach) forms a part of their permanent character. And if delight in the ordinances of religion and in the means of grace, is a permanent characteristic of God's children, then a hungering and thirsting after righteousness is also an enduring trait in their character ; since the former owes its existence and, of course, its permanency, to the existence and permanency of the latter.

7. All that vigorous effort to obtain complete salvation, which the Christian is described as making, and which he is required to make, helps establish the point, that appetite for holiness is an essential ingredient in his religion. True christianity prompts its possessor to labor for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life—to strive to enter in at the strait gate—to run the race set before him—to wrestle with principalities and powers—and to fight the good fight of faith—depending solely on the Captain of his salvation for success. See John vi. 27. Luke xiii. 24. Heb. xii. 1. Eph. vi. 12. 1 Tim. vi. 12. From this scriptural view of the Christian life we learn, that holy desire, manifested by the most vigorous and persevering exertions to obtain complete exemption from sin, constitutes a trait in the character of every follower of the Lamb. Whoever reads the scriptures with the least degree of attention, must be convinced, that the efforts which the Christian makes to obtain salvation, are not represented as terminating at the period of his regeneration. That is the period when he first enters on his pilgrimage through a wilderness of fiery trials. He then first puts on the armor of a Christian soldier, and takes the field to fight against the world, the flesh and the devil.

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

First. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness is in perfect unison with the other branches of experimental religion.

It is harmonious with the *first* Article of our experimental series. Can it be that holy love, which is the main-spring of all true godliness, should dwell in the same heart with sin, and not lust against it,



and desire its expulsion? Can it ever rest contented, until it has gained a complete dominion over the whole heart? A Christian can not exercise benevolent love towards himself, without desiring to be made perfectly holy. And true benevolence to others can not exist within him apart, from that same desire.

This thirsting after righteousness is in harmony with the *second* Article. A delight in other beings (whether Creator or creatures) on account of their holiness, will excite in us a desire to possess, to a higher degree, that loveliness of character which we discover in them. The greater the complacency we take in holy characters, the more ardently shall we desire to resemble them. Our beholding the glory of God creates a desire to be changed into the same image. In proportion to the greatness of our delight in God, is the ardor with which our souls pant after perfection.

There certainly can be no discord between this and the *third* Article. If our reconciliation and submission to God be not forced, we shall never rest while any remains of disloyalty are lurking in our hearts. They who do not desire higher degrees of submission, have not yet grounded their weapons of rebellion.

There is a very conspicuous concord between an appetite for holiness, and the subject of the *fourth* Article, namely, repentance. In exact proportion as we exercise godly sorrow for sin, shall we hunger and thirst after righteousness; that is, our love of holiness will keep pace with our hatred of sin. A penitent will never feel that he has repented enough, till his heart has become perfectly contrite.

Faith, the subject of the *fifth* Article, accords with this thirsting after higher attainments in holiness, which we have just been considering; for faith *walks* as well as *leans*. "Who is she that *cometh up* from the wilderness, *leaning* upon her Beloved?" All those whose faith is genuine, have become familiar with that prayer, which the Savior has taught them to make; "Lord, *increase* our faith."

The agreement is very perceptible between this desire after growth in grace, and *he hope of glory*, which was treated of in the *next* Article. They who hope for heaven as a world of perfect holiness, will desire increasing degrees of holiness while they continue on the earth. "Every man that hath this hope in him, *purifieth* himself."

It is equally true, that an eager desire for greater attainments in religion, is in harmony with *humility*. If these greater attainments were sought after for the purpose of exalting one's self, they would not harmonize with it at all. When a pharisee desires an increase of his religion, it is to exalt himself; but when a humble disciple of Jesus desires that his piety may be increased, it is that he himself may be more abased, and God more exalted. To be desirous of possessing more of that religion which consists in poverty of spirit, is in reality to be desirous of walking more humbly with God. But it needs a close inspection of our hearts, to enable us to decide concerning the nature of our zeal for high attainments in religion. What is our object in wishing to be greater Christians? Is it that we may be more humble and useful men; or is it that we may attract more attention to ourselves? If our zeal to be distinguished Christians, should spring from a self-righteous desire to attract the attention of our Maker, it

would not harmonize with humility, any more than if it were to be originated by a regard to the praise of men.

Secondly. This Article of experimental religion is harmonious with our *doctrinal* Articles.

This is no doubt true, in relation to all those Articles ; but I shall not detain the reader in pointing out that harmony, except in those cases where it is very apparent. This *eighth* Article in the system of experimental religion, has a manifest agreement with the *eighth* in Part I. viz. the doctrine of regeneration. If regeneration is a radical change of our depraved nature, (which it was shown to be,) it must produce a change of desires. The desires are according to the nature of the heart whence they proceed. All the desires of a natural heart are of a sinful character. They are hungerings and thirstings, not after righteousness, but unrighteousness. But when, by regenerating grace, holiness is introduced into the heart, it will send forth new desires, and such as correspond with the nature of the change which has taken place. It is therefore quite certain, that, if there be such a change as regeneration, all who experience it will hunger and thirst after righteousness. The unfeigned prayer of every one of them will be, "Create in me a clean heart, O God : and renew a right spirit within me." Ps. li. 10.

This Article harmonizes with the *twelfth* of Part I.—the doctrine of the saints' perseverance. According to *that* Article, all those who are born of God, will persevere in the way of holiness unto the end, and be saved ; and *this*, discovers to us one important means by which their perseverance will be effected, namely, their appetite for holiness, and their eager desire after increasing conformity to God. True, there is a divine power that worketh in them mightily ; but it works in them both to *will* and to *do*. They are not dragged to heaven against their wills. It is true, they are drawn ; but it is in such a way, that the more effectually they are *drawn*, the more freely they *run*. Their appetite for holiness inclines them to feed on spiritual food ; it also inclines them to seek for such food on which to feed. They labor for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life. He who has determined that the righteous shall hold on his way, has also determined on the proper means to effect so desirable an object. And what one means could be better adapted to the end, than to give him an insatiable thirst after righteousness ; and from time to time to revive it, when, by means of the lustings of the flesh, it has been abated ? Between this, and the appointed means for preserving the life and health of the body, there is a very observable analogy. God has so constituted us, that the life and health of the body are preserved by its receiving nourishment from meats and drinks ; and to secure the use of these, he has endued us with animal appetite—with hunger and thirst. In like manner, he has secured the use of that moral nutriment which believers need for the preservation of their spiritual life and health, by giving them spiritual appetite, so that they hunger and thirst after righteousness.

This Article in the experimental department, harmonizes with the *third* in the doctrinal system ; namely, that which treats of the law of God as a rule that requires perfect holiness of every intelligent creat-

ure. The believer, while on earth, is a strange compound of holiness and sin. He is, however, ready to say, "The law is spiritual, but I am carnal." He approves of the law, in all its extent and spirituality. As far as the members of the new man are formed within him, he is conformed to the law; and so ardent are the lustings of the spirit against the flesh, that he can never rest, until all the powers of his soul are brought into an entire subjection to this perfect rule. Here we observe a pleasing harmony between the law, in all its extent, and those insatiable desires after a complete conformity to it, which now exist in the heart of the believer. The time is coming, and is not far distant, when these desires will be fully realized, in a world of perfect holiness.

I need not say that this branch of the religion of the heart, is in unison with that fundamental doctrine with which we started. God is the standard of moral perfection. His rational creatures were made after his likeness. This likeness was lost by the fall; but is restored to the subjects of grace, in their regeneration. As apostacy led creatures to forsake God, so recovering grace leads them back to him. By such as experience this grace, God is again made the standard of character, and they earnestly desire to be conformed to him. Nothing short of a complete restoration of his image and favor, will satisfy the desires of them whose souls pant after God.

#### REMARKS.

1. Though perfection is never attained to in this life, there is no impropriety in saying that it *can* be. When we say of a sinner that he is *capable* of exercising repentance, it is far from asserting that he is a penitent. As there are no obstructions in the way of sinless perfection, but such as are of an inexcusable nature, it is not improper to say that such perfection is attainable. But this amounts to no proof that a single Christian has arrived at such a state. The Lord commanded the children of Israel utterly to destroy the seven nations of Canaan, leaving alive nothing that breathed. Deut. xx. 16. If we speak of the command which was given them, we say that it meant a complete extirpation of the devoted nations. And if we speak of what was practicable, we say that the divine requirement did not exceed their ability. See Num. xiii. 30. But if we speak of what they actually accomplished, we are obliged to say, "they did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the Lord commanded them: but were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works."

Divine commands requiring sinless perfection, are no proof of its actual existence; nor is the possibility of attaining to it any proof. The question now before us is, not what is our duty; but what is the fact in relation to this matter. When we come to matter of fact, we find that sinless perfection has been unknown on earth, since the fall of man, except in the case of our Redeemer. He was, in a sense peculiar to himself, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. The word *perfect*, it is true, has been applied to his followers; but it has been so explained by other things said of them, as to render it cer-



tain, that spotless purity was not the idea intended to be conveyed. The real followers of the Lamb are represented as perfect, (in distinction from unregenerate men, and especially from false professors,) because, first, they possess true holiness, which has a *perfect nature*—the nature of God himself; and, secondly, because they possess the *whole Christian character*, though only in miniature;—all the graces of the Spirit, and all the branches of holy practice. Their religion has the essential number of parts, and in this respect is perfect; and yet no single part is perfect. They have love, and submission, and repentance, and faith, and hope, and all the other graces of the Spirit; but they have none of these graces to perfection.

2. From the attention we have paid to this branch of Christian experience, we discover the unsoundness of the religion of two different classes of converts :

First. We discover the unsoundness of their religion, who imagine they have already attained to a sinless state. To determine whether the religion of such be spurious, the scripture does not require us to wait till we can compare their claims with their lives. It considers their very claims to be such as authorize us to decide concerning their character. “If I say I am perfect, it shall prove me perverse.” “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” The hating of our brother, or living an immoral life, is not spoken of as furnishing more decisive evidence of an unregenerate state, than saying that we are perfect and commit no sin. The inspired word clearly teaches that there is not a sinless man on earth—no, not a *just* man that sinneth not; and it evidently supposes that no man, who has the Spirit of God abiding in him to convince him of sin, (as every true convert has,) can possibly make a mistake in so plain a case. It supposes that no one who is spiritually enlightened, can fail to discover that, both in heart and practice, he is still sinful; that no one can be engaged in a constant conflict with indwelling sin, (as it represents every Christian to be,) and at the same time imagine that his sins are all destroyed, and that he is as pure as an angel of light.

Secondly. We discover, with equal clearness, the unsoundness of the experience of such as have no hungerings nor thirstings after righteousness—no desires to arrive at a state of perfect conformity to God. If such should say, “There is no perfection on earth—Paul declared he had not become perfect;” I would ask, Do you agree with the apostle in seeking after it, yea, in making it the grand object of pursuit? You can not but remember that while he declared he was not already perfect, he expressed an eager desire to become so. His spiritual attainments were great, compared with those of most Christians; but these attainments he left behind him, and, reaching after greater, pressed constantly towards the mark. Now if we do not resemble the apostle in this part of his experience, it will constitute but a very feeble evidence in our favor, that we agree with him in acknowledging we are not already perfect.

## ARTICLE IX.

## A SPIRIT OF FORGIVENESS IS AN ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT IN THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

A spirit of forgiveness is the direct opposite of an implacable and revengeful spirit. It disposes us to overlook and excuse the wrong that is done us, and to cherish a pacific and benevolent feeling towards the doers of that wrong. It does not, however, make sinful actions that are pointed against ourselves, appear less base and reprehensible than if they were aimed against others. All sin, against whomsoever directed, and by whomsoever committed, is hateful; and therefore if a man is guilty of sinful conduct towards us, we may, with entire consistency, abhor the conduct, while we exercise a forgiving spirit towards the man.—Nor does this spirit suppose us to be absolutely unwilling, in every instance, that those whom we forgive should receive the punishment they deserve. David's feelings towards Shimei, when he charged Solomon not to hold him guiltless, were doubtless those of a forgiving spirit. If the public good required that this wicked man should be punished, the very kindest feelings in his injured sovereign would not lead him to wish, all things considered, that he should be pardoned. The spirit in question, then, does not oppose the infliction of all punishment; but only of that which is the offspring of revenge. Selfish revenge is a disposition to injure those who have injured us, merely for the sake of retaliation, and when the public good is not at all subserved thereby. Its language is, "I will do so to him, as he hath done to me." Prov. xxiv. 29. But the spirit of forgiveness renders blessing for cursing. Rom. xii. 14. It neither wishes to avenge its own wrongs, nor have them avenged at all, unless the glory of God and the general good shall render it necessary.

It is essential to a spirit of forgiveness, that we hold ourselves ready to renew friendship with those who have injured us, as soon as they prepare the way for it by a suitable acknowledgment of their faults. In this sense of forgiveness, God waits for our repentance, before he grants us pardon. But the *spirit* of forgiveness is the same thing before repentance is manifested by the offender, as it is afterward. Thus it is with God, whose character is infinitely perfect. In his very nature he is merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth—forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7. It was a forgiving spirit which led him to devise means (and they were means which cost the blood of his well-beloved Son) to reconcile his enemies unto himself, that they might receive the forgiveness of sins. The feelings of God towards sinners before they exercise repentance, are as benevolent as they are afterwards. Though he abhors their character, there is nothing in his heart which is implacable and unmerciful. In this thing, God's children bear his likeness. Were we to delay exercising kind and benevolent feelings to-

ward our enemies, until we saw them at our feet, we should have no reason to think ourselves possessed of a truly forgiving spirit. This is the divine command, "If thine enemy" (that is, while he remains hostile) "hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink." Rom. xii. 20.

That a forgiving spirit does not need evidence of the repentance of an enemy to draw it forth, is made clear by this direction which Christ gave to his disciples: "When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any." Mark xi. 25. Here he requires his disciples, even in the act of praying, to forgive all such as they had aught against. He does not allow them to defer this until they could ascertain whether their enemies were penitent or no. Some of these, they might have no opportunity of again seeing on the earth; but they are required immediately to forgive them all. The Savior could not have required them to exercise *complacency* towards such as exhibited no marks of contrition for their faults; but even towards such, he did require the exercise of kind and benevolent feelings,—feelings which would prompt to the doing them good, and not evil; and which would rejoice in their happiness, and be grieved at their misery. They who have the true spirit of forgiveness, desire that their enemies may repent, not so much in view of the injuries done themselves, as of the sin that has been committed against God. Could they know that these enemies had humbly confessed to God, and made their peace with him, their minds would be greatly relieved.

Having shown what the spirit of forgiveness is, I shall now endeavor to demonstrate, that this spirit is essential to the Christian character.

1. It constitutes the very essence of this character, that we partake of the divine nature, and that we have the spirit of Christ: but this can never be, unless we possess a spirit of forgiveness. God is of a forgiving spirit; and it is the glory of his nature to be so. And surely, Christians can not be doubtful what was the temper of their Redeemer, in relation to this point. They will remember, that at the very moment his enemies were mocking at his dying agonies, he prayed for their forgiveness. Can any man who cherishes revengeful feelings, pretend that he has the spirit of Christ? Such an one may have been baptized with water, in his name, but surely, he has not been baptized with his Spirit.

2. The scriptures represent a forgiving spirit as one of those things which distinguish the children of God from the children of the wicked one. The children of God are called the *meek* of the earth, and the *peace-makers*. Zeph. ii. 3. Matt. v. 9. In the long conflict between Saul and David, an implacable spirit was manifested by the former, but not by the latter. The contrast between the first Christian martyr and his enemies, in relation to this point, was very striking. They gnashed on him with their teeth, and stoned him; while he cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. Acts vii. 54—60. Paul was a mark at which the Jews shot their envenomed darts; but this malevolent conduct did not excite in him a spirit of revenge.—Notwithstanding all their ill-usage, it was his heart's desire and prayer to God for them, that they might be saved.

3. It would be inconsistent to claim a share in that salvation which



is wholly by forgiveness ; where our hopes of deliverance from eternal punishment, have **nothing** but pardoning mercy on which to rest ; while we refuse to be forgiving towards our fellow men. How pertinent and forcible is that exhortation of the apostle to the saints at Ephesus : “ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, *forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*” Eph. iv. 31, 32. There is no salvation by Jesus Christ, in any other way than by forgiveness. No one is able to redeem himself, or pay the least fraction of the debt he owes to divine justice. This debt, according to the Savior's representation, is immense—a debt of ten thousand talents ; while the trespasses which others have committed against us, are represented by a debt of a few pence. Matt. xviii. 23—28. How unreasonable is it for us to expect that God will forgive us the whole of this immense debt, namely, our ten thousand aggravated transgressions against him ; if we are unwilling to forgive our fellows the few, inconsiderable trespasses which they have committed against us ?

4. Without this trait in the Christian character, there could be no peace and unity in God's moral kingdom, either in this world or the next. The church, on earth and in heaven, is made up of creatures who have sinned, not only against God, but against each other. If, therefore, they do not from the heart forgive one another, how can they dwell together in peace and unity ? Failing to forgive, contentions will assuredly break out among them, while they are in the church below ; and could they be admitted to the upper world, without having forgiven one another, they would contend even there, and we should again hear of war in heaven. Did not God freely and fully forgive those sinners whom he admits to heaven, how could eternal peace and delightful communion, subsist between him and them ?

5. There is nothing which the scriptures more clearly point out, or more peremptorily enjoin, as essential to the Christian character, than a spirit of forgiveness. It is made as much essential as love to God. “ If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother,” (which necessarily implies that he does not possess a forgiving spirit towards him,) “ he is a liar : for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen ?” 1 John iv. 20. “ Forgive,” said the divine Teacher, “ and ye shall be forgiven.” He also said, (and we should think no one could mistake his meaning,) “ If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” It is a fact worthy of serious consideration, that, in the form of prayer which our Savior has given us, he has so framed the petition we are to make for the forgiveness of our sins, that we make it wholly void, if we do not ourselves forgive those who have done us wrong. “ Forgive us our trespasses, *as we forgive* those who trespass against us.” Here we expressly tell God that we forgive our enemies ; and we seem to suggest it as a reason why he should forgive us. How great, then, must be our impiety, if, with the declaration *as we forgive* on our lips, *it be not true* that we forgive ! Supplicating God's forgiveness, with a lie in our mouth, do we not virtually imprecate his vengeance ?

This forgiving spirit is made as essential to acceptable prayer, as is faith itself. He that cometh to God in prayer, *must* believe ; else he can not please him : and he that standeth praying, *must* forgive, if he hath aught against any ; or his prayers will avail nothing. “I will,” (said the apostle) “that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands *without wrath and doubting.*” Ill will towards our fellow men, and distrust of God, are both equally repugnant to the spirit of prayer. The sinner must pray, or he can not be saved ; for it is only such as call on the name of the Lord, that shall be saved. He must ask for the forgiveness of his sins, if he would have them forgiven ; but this he can not ask for acceptably, unless he will consent to do to others, as he desires God should do to him. His salvation is suspended on the condition of his unfeignedly forgiving such as have trespassed against him.

This brings to my mind the case of a young man, with whose experiences I had opportunity to be particularly acquainted. While he was yet neglectful of the great salvation, he received from another young man an unprovoked injury ; and he resolved to have revenge, whenever it should be placed within his reach. Not long after this, he became very anxious about the interests of his soul. And now the Spirit of God, who is sent to reprove the world of sin, reproved him for his revengeful feelings towards his enemy, and convinced him, that unless he exercised a totally different spirit, he could never have the forgiveness of God. To satiate his revenge, had been his darling object of pursuit ; and to relinquish that object, much more, to forgive him who was to have felt his vengeance, seemed utterly impossible. He clearly saw that he must forgive, or he could not be forgiven : and yet such was his reluctance to do it, that for a while, it seemed as if he had rather remain unpardoned, than to give up his revengeful feelings and purposes. At length, however, he was mercifully brought to receive pardon, on those terms which his spirit of retaliation had so obstinately resisted. He was convinced that he took more satisfaction (and satisfaction altogether of a purer nature) in forgiving and praying for the young man who had injured him, than he could possibly have received, in executing that vengeance which he had once meditated. He now looked upon that unforgiving spirit which he had cherished, and which he had been so unwilling to surrender, as a heinous sin ; and he viewed himself as vastly more guilty, in the sight of God, for his unwillingness to forgive, than his comrade was for doing him the injury.

This case has been introduced to show, that the gospel makes a forgiving spirit so essential to the Christian character, that as soon might we expect to be admitted to heaven, without exercising repentance, as without exercising a spirit of forgiveness. It makes it essential, too, that we should voluntarily forgive ; that we should *choose* to forgive our enemies, instead of wreaking vengeance on them ; and this too, even if the latter act would not expose us to the vengeance of God, any more than the former. How emphatic are these words, that once fell from the lips of Him, at whose bar we shall all be arraigned : ‘ So likewise shall my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye *from your hearts* forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.’ Matt. xviii. 35.

To prevent any from mistaking their own character, in relation to this branch of Christian experience, let the following additional remarks be duly considered.

1st. Though all the children of God have a forgiving spirit, it is not full proof that we are not his children, because we sometimes exhibit a contrary spirit. This remark is not intended to justify the least degree of implacableness; for the whole of it is contrary to the Spirit of Christ. But it is a scriptural truth, that the children of God are imperfect,—sanctified but in part. They are liable to irritation, and this creates a desire for revenge. Thus it was with the man after God's own heart, when he was insulted by churlish Nabal. But a spirit of revenge is not the *habitual* temper of such as are born of God. The scripture forbids all irritation; and when it has sprung up in the bosom, we are forbidden to cherish it. "Be ye angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath." It is letting the sun go down upon our wrath, which ranks us with the implacable and unmerciful. This, rather than his first irritation and threats, proved Esau to be unforgiving in his spirit towards Jacob; for he suffered the suns of twenty years to go down upon his wrath. Such a cherished revenge as this, is totally incompatible with a renovation of heart. It is not a characteristic of God's children. They have, each of them, unfeignedly obeyed that precept in the law of Moses: "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people." The heart which bears the grudge, or "the old hatred," (as it is elsewhere called,) is not a heart in which dwelleth the love of God. "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now."

2dly. There is some danger that we shall imagine we have fully forgiven our enemy, and banished all angry feelings, when in reality those feelings have only become dormant; a result which may have been effected, either by the death of our enemy, or by his long absence. It is not probable that Esau felt, from day to day, the sensible workings of revenge, during the twenty years of his separation from Jacob. There were, no doubt, many days of that long period, when he did not so much as recall to mind the injury he had received. And even the remembrance of it, after a lapse of years, would make a comparatively faint impression, so long as there was no probability that he and his far distant brother would meet again. But when he heard that Jacob was on his way back to Canaan, his implacable feelings were all revived, and he renewed his determination to obtain revenge.

If we would not be deceived about our own character, we must not fail to make a distinction between *mortifying* our members that are on the earth, and letting them die a *natural death*. Should we, instead of crucifying this particular member of the old man, merely suffer it to die of itself, there would be no evidence that we possess that forgiving spirit, without which, we are assured we shall not receive forgiveness from God.

3dly. There is danger some will flatter themselves that they are possessed of this part of the Christian character, simply because they have great natural placidness of temper. Such ought to know, that



the forgiving spirit which forms a part of the Christian character, is not a plant which grows in nature's garden. An easy, placid temper may resemble it, but is not the very thing. Christian forgiveness never exists in the soul, except implanted there by the power of the Holy Ghost. The *gentleness* and *meekness* which distinguish the Christian, are said to be the fruit of the Spirit. See Gal. v. 22, 23. We ought to remember, that the grace of forgiveness does not consist in negatives alone; it does not merely suffer our enemy to go away unhurt; but it follows him with benevolent desires and prayers, and when practicable, with kind offices and self-denying services.

In the Introduction of this work it was shown, that there could be no discord between the different parts of the word of truth. And in the present Article, I trust it has been satisfactorily shown, that the scriptures not only inculcate a forgiving spirit, but make it essential to the Christian character. It necessarily follows, then, that an implacable, resentful disposition, is wholly discountenanced in the word of God. But the loveliness of a forgiving temper, and the duty of possessing it, are amply enlarged upon in that inspired volume. It is never represented as mean and pusillanimous, but as noble and God-like. Both Testaments agree in requiring us to love and forgive our enemies. This was the religion of Moses, and of Christ. Of the former, nothing is spoken more to his honor than this, that *he was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth*. And in the life of Christ, no trait of character is presented as being more attractive, than his meek, forgiving spirit. It was this that shed an ineffable glory around his cross.

Some may think that the eternal punishment of the wicked; the sanguinary laws of Moses; the command given to destroy the Canaanites; and those imprecations of evil on enemies, which are found in the scriptures, and particularly in the Psalms of David—are things which can not harmonize with that spirit of forgiveness which is made so essential to salvation. To each of these seeming difficulties, let us pay a brief attention.

(1.) It is objected, that *the doctrine of eternal punishment does not agree with the scriptural precepts which relate to the duty of forgiving our enemies*. To this it may be replied, that *eternal* punishment is no more opposed to the spirit of forgiveness, than *temporary* punishment; provided it be inflicted without malice, and with a view to the public welfare. It is contrary to the spirit of forgiveness to inflict the least degree of pain, where it is unnecessary; but it does not forbid the infliction of the severest punishment, when it has been merited, and when the public good requires it should be endured. It is as true, that the Lord does not *willingly* afflict and grieve the children of men, in this world, as that he does not delight in their misery, in the world to come. The Supreme Ruler has given more decided proof of a forgiving spirit, than any other ruler who ever swayed a sceptre. He has not only forgiven a much greater number of rebels, but the way in which he has extended pardon to them, is calculated to exalt our conceptions of the strength and disinterestedness of his forgiving spirit. If, with all the proofs he has given, any of his subjects still entertain doubts whether he is truly of a forgiving spirit, it must be because

they wilfully close their eyes against evidence. They who are not convinced of the merciful nature of God, by what he has already done, would be satisfied with nothing short of his entirely relinquishing the reins of government. If the infliction of punishment, in every case, be considered as incompatible with a forgiving spirit, then with that spirit, the exercise of all moral government must likewise be incompatible. But it is not true, that all infliction of punishment is inconsistent with a forgiving spirit. We know that there is an entire disagreement between a forgiving spirit, and selfish revenge; but such a spirit is not at variance with a benevolent vengeance, which desires the punishment of the guilty, only for the sake of promoting the general good: and such is the nature of that vengeance which belongeth to the Lord our God. It is not, in the smallest degree, owing to the want of a forgiving spirit in God, that all the rebels under his government are not pardoned. He forgives all who repent; and, of mere grace, he gives repentance to all whose deliverance from deserved punishment, he sees will consist with the greatest stability and blessedness of his everlasting kingdom.

(2.) It is objected, that *the sanguinary laws of Moses are in contrariety to the spirit of forgiveness*. But why should the penalties annexed to these laws, be considered as in contrariety to the spirit of forgiveness, when the pains of the second death, which are infinitely more dreadful, are in consistency with it? Those sanguinary punishments were appointed by God himself, and were intended to prevent the commission of sin, by clearly manifesting his disapprobation of it. They were also designed to exert an influence on us gentiles, (who are not in this life subjected to all the penalties of that law,) as means of preventing our eternal perdition. This we may learn from what is said, Heb. x. 28, 29; "He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?"

(3.) It is objected, that *the destruction of the Canaanites by a divine command, stands in direct opposition to that forgiving spirit which the scriptures inculcate*. Let us remember that all men deserve evil at the hand of God. They deserve to be swept off from the face of the earth: or how can we vindicate the providence of God in actually doing it, from generation to generation? The Canaanites, as a people, had become so abominably corrupt, that the interests of the kingdom of God required they should be made an example of his vengeance. He had a right to execute vengeance with his own almighty arm, or to appoint others to do it in his behalf. This work he manifestly committed to the children of Israel; and they were commanded not to spare the criminals. In human governments, an obligation is resting on the sheriff, (or other officer appointed for the purpose,) to execute sentence of death on such as have been condemned to suffer that punishment. Is it necessary to suppose that the legislature which enacts criminal statutes, or the court which condemns certain offenders to die, are actuated by a spirit of malice or revenge? Or does such a spirit necessarily actuate the sheriff, when, in obedience to the mandate of the court, he launches a fellow being into eternity? If God's command

respecting the seven nations of Canaan, had authorized his people to execute it in the exercise of malicious hatred, neither the command, nor the act it enjoined, would have accorded with that forgiving spirit which the scriptures so frequently inculcate. But it did not thus authorize them; nor can a command that does do it, be found in any part of the inspired volume.

(4.) It is objected, that *those imprecations of evil on enemies, which are found in the scriptures, and particularly in the Psalms of David, are repugnant to a spirit of forgiveness.* There are some who are disposed to consider all these imprecations as wrong, and as so many evidences of the imperfection of the saints. It is acknowledged that the Bible saints, as well as others, were imperfect, and some of the imprecations attributed to them might have been the effect of an unholy irritation: but we ought not to ascribe this character to the imprecations which are found in the book of Psalms—a book which contains the inspired songs of Zion. These songs were not only sung by the sweet singer of Israel, but were sent to the chief musician, to be sung by the whole congregation of the Lord. Had they been interlarded with imprecations that were inconsistent with the spirit of forgiveness, they would have proved a snare to the people of God. Paul has a quotation from one of the most dreadful imprecations which is found in the Psalms; and yet he evidently quotes it, not only as a portion of holy writ, but as a portion which breathes the spirit of holiness.\*

It ought also to be remembered, that in some of these imprecations, and in such as would seem the most objectionable, David speaks in the name of his greater Son, the Lord's Anointed. This is manifestly true of the 109th Psalm. See verses 2, 4, 8, 25. I am fully convinced that we ought not to consider the imprecations which are found in the Psalms, as expressing any feelings which it is improper for us to cherish. But how, it may be asked, are such imprecations consistent with the spirit of forgiveness? Their consistency with it will appear by the two following considerations:

First. It is not inconsistent with the best feelings towards the wicked, to pray against them, when they are considered as the enemies of Christ and his church. If they who are not with Christ, are against him, we can not pray for the cause of Christ, without virtually praying against all who are on the other side—who gather not with him, but scatter abroad. It implies no malicious hatred towards the enemies of Christ, that we ardently desire that all their devices against him and the cause of truth, may be frustrated. Just as it was proper for David to pray the Lord to turn the counsels of Ahithophel into foolishness, so it is perfectly consistent with benevolence itself, that we should pray God to turn all the counsels of *wicked men*, considered as such, into foolishness; and even cause them to subserve that holy cause which they were intended to annoy. Our prayers against the wicked do not necessarily imply that we desire their misery; or even that we do not

\* Rom. xi. 9, 10. "And David saith, Let their table be made a snare and a trap," &c. Some have attempted to obviate the difficulty in question by remarking, that in the original Hebrew, David's imprecations are found to be in the future tense, and not in the imperative mood. But Paul, who was an inspired expositor, has put them into the imperative mood, instead of the future tense of the indicative; and this decides the lawfulness of the imprecatory style.



ardently desire their happiness. In no way could these prayers be answered which would be so gratifying to pious minds, as in their conversion and eternal deliverance from all evil. But our prayers do, at the same time, virtually include a request, that, should they never voluntarily submit to Christ, they may be put under his feet. We can not petition for the complete exaltation and triumph of Zion's King, without, in effect, petitioning for the downfall of all his incorrigible foes : for if the one cause rises, the other must sink. All the sincere prayers in behalf of Zion which rise before the mercy-seat, have, in reality, a bearing on the state of her enemies ; and they will be answered, either in bringing them over to her side, or in binding them hand and foot, so that they can do her no more harm.

Secondly. Wherever, in the book of Psalms, certain destruction is imprecated on any particular individuals or nation, we are to understand it as comprehending a *prediction*, declaring the purpose of God to destroy such persons or people. This remark will apply to the imprecations which are found in all the other acceptable prayers recorded in the scriptures. I say *acceptable* prayers ; because prayers of a different character are undoubtedly recorded in this holy book. Witness the prayer of Jezebel against Elijah, and that of Jeremiah against the man who brought his father the tidings of his birth. Neither of these imprecations (though one of them fell from the lips of a holy prophet) ought to be considered as holy or acceptable. But there were undoubtedly holy prayers which contained imprecations ; and some of these were *personal*, calling for vengeance to be executed on particular individuals, or a particular people. The destruction of Judas, and the judicial blindness and reprobation of the Jewish nation, appear to be imprecated in the prayers which are contained in the 109th Psalm. Paul seems to call down a curse, and not a blessing, on Alexander the coppersmith, (who did him much evil,) when he says, "The Lord reward him according to his works." In these and similar cases, we are not to suppose that the imprecations express malicious or unforgiving feelings towards the ones who are thus anathematized, but are to be understood as so many *divine predictions* of the certain destruction of those against whom they were uttered. They were also intended to show, that the destruction imprecated comes from the Almighty ; while the prophets and apostles, together with all who fear God, do, by such imprecations, cordially assent to God's decree. And here let it be remembered, that, since the spirit of prophecy is no longer granted to the church, imprecations, calling for the destruction of particular men, or tribes of men, must now be improper and profane.

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

First. A forgiving spirit fully accords with all the other branches of *experimental* religion. Its harmony with the *love of benevolence* is very manifest. It was shown to be the nature of benevolence, to wish well to all, whatever might be the character they possessed. If enemies can be *loved*, they can be *forgiven*. The spirit of benevolence and that of forgiveness, have such a near resemblance as to be scarcely

distinguishable. Benevolence, however, could have been exercised, even if none but holy beings had ever existed; but the spirit of forgiveness could not.

This Article has no disagreement with the *second*; for while it exhibits the good man as exercising a forgiving spirit towards his worst enemies, it does not expect him to delight in them, until they shall evince an alteration in their hostile feelings. But as a placable spirit wishes no ill, even to an inveterate foe, it waits and longs for an opportunity to add the love of *complacency* to that of benevolence.

A reconcilable spirit towards those of our fellow men with whom we have been at variance, harmonizes with that actual reconciliation to God, which constitutes the subject of the *third* Article. If we have given up our enmity against Him, whom we hated more than any other being in the universe, the very spirit of hatred and revenge has received a death wound. When we are at peace with God, we are prepared to be at peace with men. If hostilities are still kept up, the Christian should let his enemies do all the fighting; at least, all that which is the result of angry and revengeful feelings.

Forgiveness of injuries is in concord with repentance—the subject of the *fourth* Article. Can a penitent, who is confessing to God that his iniquities are more than the hairs of his head, and who is beseeching him freely to forgive them all,—can he, at the same time, be unwilling to forgive the few trespasses that have been committed against himself? He will say, What are offenses against such a worm of the dust as I am, in comparison with my offenses against the infinite God! His godly sorrow will exclude all bitterness of feeling towards his enemies, even if they continue to do him wrong. See 2 Sam. xvi. 5—13.

A kind, placable, forgiving spirit, sweetly coalesces with all the other gracious affections by which the Christian is distinguished. It harmonizes with his *faith in Christ*; through whom he expects to obtain the forgiveness of a multitude of sins—with a *hope*, thence derived, of being finally admitted to heaven as a monument of infinite grace—and with *humility*, which, as the moral opposite of pride, is not contentious nor revengeful. It also accords with his hunger and thirst after righteousness. We should be shocked, rather than gratified, to hear any one speak of his insatiable desires to grow in grace, at the very time he is cherishing in his heart a grudge toward his Christian brother, or any other man: for these are such affections as do not coalesce.

Secondly. A forgiving spirit is in unison with our *doctrinal system*. It harmonizes with the *first two* Articles; which relate to God, and his works of creation and providence. Every system of religion is based on the belief, that there is some over-ruling power which controls human destiny. And the character it ascribes to that ruling power, gives its complexion to the whole system. No scheme of religion can be calculated to make those who embrace it, possess a character more perfect than that which is ascribed to its deity, its object of supreme worship. If the God whom they adore be represented as implacable, it can not be expected that his worshipers will be of a forgiving spirit. But implacability is far from being attributable to Jehovah, the God of

the scriptures. It is in view of his benevolent, forgiving character, that a benevolent and forgiving spirit is urged upon us. When the Savior inculcated on his disciples love to their enemies, he enforced it by saying, "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." And the apostle urges Christians to forgive one another, by saying, "Even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you."

There is no discord between a forgiving spirit and the *third* Article. It is not the province of the *law* to propose forgiveness to such as may transgress its precepts, nor even to make provision for it. But the character which it exhibits the great Lawgiver as possessing, and which it requires of all his subjects, is not implacable, but merciful. In every heart where the moral law is written, there necessarily exists the spirit of forgiveness.

Had there been no foundation for the *fourth* doctrinal Article, namely, that which relates to apostasy, there would have been no place for the experimental Article now before us; that is, had the moral system known nothing of such beings as sinners and enemies, it could never have discovered such a thing as the spirit of forgiveness.

The Article before us, is in perfect consonance with the *fifth* and *eleventh* Articles of the doctrinal series; the former of which relates to the great sacrifice that was made for sin; and the latter, to the forgiveness of sin, through the medium of that sacrifice. Here, the forgiving spirit is displayed to infinite advantage, and seems calculated, beyond every thing else, to exert an influence on us, for whom this propitiatory sacrifice was offered.

The *sixth* doctrinal Article exhibits the Sovereign of the universe, as tendering the offer of forgiveness to every rebel on earth, who shall return to him through the mediation of his Son. And what shame belongs to a world of hell-deserving sinners, that an offer, which displays such a forgiving spirit on the part of their injured Sovereign, should be so universally and obstinately rejected; according to the showing of the *next* Article. The *eighth*, which relates to regeneration, represents the Supreme King as being so strongly inclined to exercise forgiveness towards rebels, as to be thereby prompted to prepare them, by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, to receive the blessings which they would otherwise continue to refuse.

The *twelfth* Article shows that this forgiving spirit towards pardoned rebels, has a permanency in the heart of God. We are assured there is no more condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. He not only remembers no more their former sins, but also pardons all their new transgressions. The covenant of peace made with them, is an everlasting covenant.

The *thirteenth* Article exhibits those who receive forgiveness here, as having it ratified when they are placed at the right hand of Christ, in the day of judgment. [Acts iii. 19.] After this public manifestation of their acceptance, they will be received to glory, and will forever enjoy the uninterrupted favor of that infinite Being, against whom they once rebelled, and whom they hated without a cause. "Whom he justified, them he also glorified."



Now what can be better adapted, than such doctrines as these, to form a forgiving character? Can we conceive of any other system of doctrine so well calculated to produce this effect? Certain it is, that among all the schemes of religion which have been propagated, there is nothing to be compared with it. That illustration of the spirit of forgiveness which the gospel furnishes, is the greatest, purest, and most attractive, that could possibly be given. The motives by which it is urged upon us, are unspeakably impressive. If, with the gospel of Jesus Christ before us, we can indulge and justify an implacable, revengeful spirit, there is no hope that any scheme of doctrine can be found, which will effect a reformation in our views and feelings.

Perhaps some may think that the doctrines exhibited in the *ninth* and *tenth* Articles, (which doctrines represent God as making a difference among his enemies, showing mercy to some and not to others,) are not entirely consistent with a kind, forgiving spirit. They may imagine, that these doctrines will, as it were, authorize us to be forgiving towards some of our enemies, and unforgiving towards others. The scriptures represent God as possessed of a forgiving spirit towards all; as actually forgiving and restoring to favor all who repent; and as giving repentance to as many as will consist with the interests of his extensive and everlasting kingdom. If, therefore, we imitate our Father in heaven, we shall cherish a forgiving spirit towards all our enemies: and this we shall manifest, by doing them good as we have opportunity, and by cheerfully restoring to our friendship, all such as give evidence of contrition for their faults.

#### REMARKS.

1. The want of a forgiving spirit, when it appears in the church, forms one of its most unlovely features. In the religion of Christ, the spirit of forgiveness has great prominence; not only on account of his precepts and examples, which were wholly in its favor, but because none can become interested in his salvation, without being driven to build all their hopes on the forgiving mercy of God. Nor is it a single offense which is forgiven the heirs of salvation; no, the free gift is of many offenses. If a soul be saved from death, it is accompanied with the hiding of a multitude of sins. Rom. v. 16. Ja. v. 20. Now, if in the church of Christ, composed of such as profess to have been forgiven innumerable and aggravated transgressions, there is an unwillingness to forgive their fellow servants a few inconsiderable offenses, what an unlovely and unnatural appearance does it present! In that portion of the church which is on the earth, there must needs be continual calls for the exercise of mutual forbearance and forgiveness. Without a repentant and forgiving spirit, there can be no peace. Where offenders are unwilling to confess their faults, and the offended to forgive, the church presents to her enemies a very unamiable aspect. Such things within her sacred walls, do her greater injury than all the battering rams which can be brought against her from without. All, therefore, who love her best interests, will unite in the prayer, "Peace be within thy walls." But no peace can be

there, if the spirit of forgiveness be not there. Two individuals, if they indulge a hostile, revengeful spirit towards each other, are enough to disturb the peace of a whole church. In an inspired epistle to a church, Paul names two individuals, (female members,) who appeared to be at variance; beseeching them to be of the same mind in the Lord. Phil. iv. 2. Let us, my brethren, cultivate and manifest the meek, peaceable, and forgiving spirit of our Master, or make no pretension to be his disciples. A revengeful, unforgiving disciple of Christ—what a contradiction!

2. In view of the amiableness of a forgiving spirit, we discover one reason why the light of the church has often been increased by persecution. The same things that have displayed bitterness and revenge, on the part of her enemies, have called forth from her the spirit of forgiveness. When did the spirit of forgiveness in our blessed Lord, appear to so great advantage, as when his enemies, under the influence of revenge, were persecuting him even unto death? Never has the forgiving spirit of the divine Jesus been so well illustrated by his disciples, as when they have been in the fire of persecution. How lovely did the first Christian martyr appear, in praying for his murderers, that the Lord would not lay that sin to their charge. The great apostle of the gentiles manifested very much of this spirit towards the Jews, at the very time when he knew they were entering into conspiracies against his life. He could say with sincerity, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." The peculiar advantage that a time of persecution has given the followers of Christ, to display the excellency of their benevolent, forgiving spirit, in contrast with the malicious and murderous spirit of their enemies, is one reason why the blood of the martyrs has proved to be the seed of the church.

3. This Article of Christian experience, discovers one of the moral impediments in the way of effecting the conversion of sinners, and discipling the nations. The scripture testifies of men, that they hate one another, and that they are implacable and unmerciful. Nor is this unlovely character a thing of which they wish to be divested. If Christ would secure men against future punishment, and still allow them to retain their piques and enmities, and to avenge themselves, it would not be so difficult to fill the ranks in the Christian army. But when he is heard unequivocally to assert, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses:" and again, that if it be not done from the *heart*, it will not rescue us from the place of torment; we find that it is no easy thing to make Christians. Men are apt to wonder why the Bible says so much about the necessity of the special agency of the Holy Ghost, to effect their conversion. The necessity arises from the moral impediments which our wicked hearts present; and among these, an unforgiving spirit is one of no inconsiderable magnitude. Selfish hearts are entirely opposed to the exercise of Christian forgiveness. Selfish motives may sometimes prevail with a sinner to relinquish open hostilities, and become *apparently* reconciled to his enemy; but to transform a revengeful into a forgiving spirit, a spirit that shall forgive all enemies and love to forgive them, is beyond the power of man; it needs the mightier power of God.

## ARTICLE X.

SELF-DENIAL IS A DISTINCTIVE FEATURE OF GENUINE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

It concerns us to form a correct and definite idea of that self-denial which is exhibited in the scriptures ; also, to see what is the evidence of its being made essential to the Christian character.

I. Let us seek to understand what is meant by self-denial. The Savior said, "If any man will come after me, let him *deny himself*." A man's denying himself stands opposed to his pleasing himself : or, perhaps, with stricter propriety, it may be said, he is pleased, for the sake of promoting a greater good, to surrender that which is in itself dear ; or do that which is in itself an unpleasant service. In the self-denying spirit which is enjoined by the Savior, the following things are implied :

1. The voluntary relinquishment of all those pleasures which are sinful. The scripture speaks of "the pleasures of sin." In this world of probation, sinners are not only suffered to have a degree of happiness, but also to derive some of it from their sins. Though they lose a far greater and purer enjoyment, still their very sin has its pleasures. The intemperate derive a present gratification from indulging themselves in excessive eating and drinking. The lascivious have *their* pleasures of sin. They who have been luxurious and wanton, are said to have lived in *pleasure* on the earth : and a night devoted to feasting and vain mirth, is called "the night of pleasure." A sinful world is full of sinful pleasures. These are very extensively idolized ; for men are "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." To the happiness of wicked men, they are what the right eye and the right hand are to the body. But as a right eye or a right hand, when they endanger the life of the body, are to be given up, so are these soul-destroying pleasures to be abandoned. "If thy right eye offend thee," said the divine Teacher, "pluck it out ; and if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off." Self-denial requires that every forbidden enjoyment, every sinful pleasure, be given up ; for the grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness and *worldly lusts*. When we pertinaciously retain any *one* of the pleasures of sin, it is an evidence that *none* are relinquished from proper motives. If we are influenced by right motives, we shall deny ourselves the pleasures of sin, because they are *sinful* ; and such motives will influence us to relinquish all those pleasures which are of this character.

2 Self-denial supposes, not only the relinquishment of those gratifications which are in themselves sinful, but a willingness to give up those which are innocent, when the interests of the kingdom of God render it necessary. Self-denial can therefore be practiced by such beings as have no sinful pleasures to renounce. The sinless Jesus practiced self-denial, and that to an infinite degree. And when he



required his followers to forsake houses, and brethren, and sisters, and father, and mother, and wife, and children, and lands, for his name's sake, it was not because the enjoyment of these things was in itself unlawful. Even when we forsake all these things for Christ, he commonly leaves us in possession of them. In his sight, we practice self-denial, if we give them all up, and submit it to him, either to take them from us, or leave them in our hands, as shall best subserve the interests of his kingdom. In the exercise of self-denial, the primitive Christians not only submitted to the loss of property, when it was wrested from them, so that they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods; they also voluntarily devoted much of their substance to the cause of Christ. To further such a glorious cause, the apostles forsook all they had. The spirit which governed them is breathed out in these words of Paul, in his second epistle to the church at Corinth: "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." 2 Cor. xii. 15.

It must never be forgotten, that self-denial is accompanied with a *cross-bearing* spirit; and indeed can not exist without it. When Christ had said, "*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself,*" he immediately added, "*and take up his cross, and follow me.*" This implies, that if he does the one, he will do the other; if he denies himself, he will take up his cross. But what is meant, it may be asked, by the Christian's *cross*? Reference is undoubtedly had to the cross on which the Savior died. This cross was laid in his way, and the glory of God and the salvation of men, required that he should not only bear it, but expire on it. The same spirit of self-denial, which he manifested in that act, he requires of every one of his followers. Some of them have had a literal cross thrown athwart their path; and the interests of their Master have required them to evince their self-denial, by submitting to crucifixion. We hear one of the followers of the Lamb saying, in view of such sufferings, "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus." Acts xxi. 13. This is a good illustration of a cross-bearing spirit.

Every self-denying act may be considered a cross, which, when Providence places it in our way, it is our duty to take up and bear. Selfishness would invent excuses for going around it; but a self-denying spirit enables the Christian to silence objections, and go forward in the path of duty, even when he finds it beset with briers and thorns. Self-denial has done wonders in promoting a benevolent and efficient discipline in the church of Christ; and without such a spirit, discipline will be either neglected or abused. It is of vital importance, both to preserve the internal purity of the church, and to promote its extension in the earth. Had there been no self-denial exercised, the apostles would not have endured so many privations and persecutions for the elects' sake, that they might obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus. 2 Tim. ii. 10. And were no such spirit prevalent in our own times, it is more than probable that those missionaries, who have relinquished all the delights of civilized life to live and die in pagan lands, would have found reasons enough for remaining at home. These cases of self-denying duty are instanced, merely to illustrate what is intended by the Christian's taking up his cross.

3. It is necessary to be distinctly understood, that we exercise no true self-denial, only when we deny ourselves for the good of *others*. If there were but one being in the universe, there would be no place for its exercise. Had the Deity forever remained alone, his love would have been of a holy, and not of a selfish nature ; but there would have been nothing to call forth a spirit of self-denial.

That self-denial which helps constitute the Christian character, does not consist in relinquishing one selfish enjoyment, for the sake of securing another. A man may give up one sinful pleasure, for the sake of enjoying another equally sinful ; but this is not, in any proper sense, the spirit of self-denial. Some may think that the spendthrift has denied himself, because he has become a miser. But the truth is, that he has surrendered one kind of selfish gratification, only that he may indulge in another, that is no less selfish. Should a man who has idolized money, all at once become exceedingly lavish of it in charity, it might, at first glance, seem to be an act of great self-denial ; but if we ascertain that he did it just because he loved popularity more than money, we are satisfied that no real self-denial has been exercised.

The relinquishment of present good, for the sake of that which is future, is not that denying of one's self, which the Savior made a requisite to discipleship. The thing required is, not that a man should deny himself for the sake of his own good, but for the good of others. That *forsaking of all*, which Christ required of his followers, was to be done for *his sake* : " Every one that hath forsaken houses, &c. for *my name's sake*." " And whosoever will lose his life *for my sake*, shall find it." Matt. xix. 29, and xvi. 25. In the thirteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle supposes two cases, both of which were apparently very striking acts of self-denial ; namely, a man's bestowing all his goods to feed the poor, and his giving his body to be burned ; and then he proceeds to tell us, that if he does all this without charity, it will profit him nothing. In close connection with this he informs us, that it is one of the characteristics of charity, that *she seeketh not her own*. One of the sacrifices which is here supposed, namely, a man's giving his body to be burned, must be understood to be made for the sake of securing happiness in the world to come ; and yet even this is declared to be worthless. A man's giving up his happiness in one world, merely for the sake of securing it in another, is, in no proper sense, an act of self-denial ; any more than parting with his possessions in one country, in order to purchase those which are more valuable in another.

But does not God, it will be asked, promise future rewards, with a view to excite to the performance of self-denying actions ? To this it may be replied,

1st. It is to them only, who have the genuine spirit of self-denial, that God promises any reward. At the same time that our blessed Lord inculcated self-denial as essential to discipleship, he said, " Whosoever will lose his life *for my sake*, shall find it." He did not say, Whosoever will lose his life for his own sake, or merely for the sake of finding it, shall therefore find it. The promise of eternal blessedness to such an unselfish affection as losing our life for Christ's sake, serves to show what a high value is put upon disinterested religion by

Him who is to be the Judge of quick and dead. The reward promised to disinterested actions, certainly can not be designed to encourage a mercenary spirit. Yet we can all see it is highly proper that such actions should be distinguished, by being rewarded.

2dly. Such is the nature of the reward promised, that it can be enjoyed only by those who deny themselves, for the sake of promoting the glory of God and the good of their fellow men. That eternal life which is promised, is to consist in knowing the only living and true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent; as also in loving and serving them, without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our existence.\* They, who deny themselves present enjoyment from no higher motive than to secure their own happiness in eternity, do not, in any proper sense, have respect to the recompense of the reward. They do not truly desire that reward which God has promised to them that love him. Truly to desire such a reward, necessarily supposes a disinterested frame of mind. They who deny themselves for their own sake, instead of doing it for Christ's sake, have no meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light.

II. Having taken an imperfect view of the nature of self-denial, let us now turn our attention to the evidence of its being essential to the Christian character.

1. Without a spirit of self-denial, we can have no excellency of character; we can have nothing better than selfishness. And what is more pointedly reprobated in the word of God, than a selfish character? This is the first thing which Paul mentions as causing the perilous times of the last days: "For men shall be lovers of their own selves." 2 Tim. iii. 2. Israel was condemned as an empty vine, not because he was absolutely fruitless, but because he brought forth fruit unto himself. Hos. x. 1. Timothy is commended by Paul, because he differed from those who sought their own, and not the things of Jesus Christ. Phil. ii. 20, 21. Selfishness, through all the sacred books, is condemned as a sin; yea more, as a sin that comprehends the *whole* of a sinful character. Surely, then, there can be no moral excellence where there is nothing better than a spirit of selfishness. And there can be nothing better, where there is no spirit of self-denial. It is vain to imagine that we can have disinterested love to our fellow men, and yet have no willingness to make personal sacrifices to promote their happiness.

2. Without self-denial, we are destitute of the spirit of Christ, and therefore are none of his. Christ had a self-denying spirit. Nothing was more prominent in his character than this. The occasion which led him explicitly to enjoin self-denial on his followers, was this: He made his disciples acquainted with the sufferings he was about to undergo at Jerusalem. This led Peter to dissuade him from enduring those sufferings. But he told Peter that he was an offense to him, and that he savored not the things that were of God, but those that were of men. Immediately upon this it is added: "Then

\* "This day," said Brainard, "I saw clearly that I should never be happy, yea, that God himself could not make me happy, unless I could be in a capacity to please and glorify him forever. Take away this, and admit me into all the fine heavens that can be conceived of by men or angels, and I should be miserable forever."



said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life, for my sake, shall find it." Here we have, first, a display of the self-denying spirit of the Master; and next we are advertised, that unless we possess a similar spirit, we can not be his disciples. See Matt. xvi. 21—25.

At another time, Christ inculcated self-denying duties on his disciples, by telling them that the Son of Man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. Matt. xx. 28. To the saints at Rome, the apostle says, "Let every one of us please his neighbor, for his good, to edification." This exhortation he enforces by the example of Christ: "For even Christ pleased not himself." And to the saints at Philippi, he says, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ." He then proceeds to show what unbounded self-denial the Redeemer practiced. He who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, and humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. See Phil. ii. 4—8.

The self-denial which is called for in the bestowment of alms, is urged upon us by the example of Christ. "For ye know," said the apostle, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." 2 Cor. viii. 9. The self-denial which is required in risking our lives for the good of others, is also urged upon us by the same divine example. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." 1 John iii. 16.

In the humiliation and sufferings of the Son of God for the redemption of men, we have the greatest possible display of the spirit of self-denial. The display was none the less perfect, because the Father, who pleased to bruise him, has also been pleased to exalt him, and give him a name above every name. Such unbounded self-denial could not consistently go unrewarded, or receive any less reward than one which is infinite. Some may suppose that this reward (namely, his own personal exaltation) was the very thing which made him willing to suffer; since the scripture informs us it was *for the joy set before him, that he endured the cross*. By the joy set before him, which reconciled him to the pain and shame of the cross, we ought not to understand his personal exaltation, so much as the *good* which he saw his death would be the means of accomplishing. He saw that he should save a great multitude of fallen creatures from sin and ruin; and that their salvation, instead of weakening divine government, would gloriously establish it. See Isa. liii. 10—12.

In view of the infinite self-denial which *Christ* exhibited, can it be a question, whether self-denial is essential to the character of a *Christian*? Must not a *follower* of Christ consent to undergo privations, and make sacrifices of time, property, and other things which he deems valuable, for the sake of glorifying God and benefiting his fellow men? And can there be *much of the spirit of Christ*, where there is not a willingness to practice *much self-denial*?

3. There is nothing more explicitly enjoined, or described as being more absolutely requisite in every follower of the Lamb, than this ; that he should deny himself. "If *any man* will come after me," said the holy Jesus, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." Matt. xvi. 24. This was as much as if he had said, No man can be my disciple on any lower conditions than these. At another time, when he was followed by a great multitude, he turned and said unto them, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he can not be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, can not be my disciple." Luke xiv. 26, 27. To enforce the necessity of a spirit of self-denial, as a qualification for discipleship, he makes two interrogatory suppositions. In the first, he intimates that a man who is about to build a tower, ought first to count the cost, and see whether it does not exceed his means ; lest peradventure, his labor should be lost, and serve only to cover him with shame, for having undertaken what he was unable to finish. In the second, he inquires whether a king does not, before going to war, weigh well the chances of success ; intimating that it would be folly to risk a battle, where there was no prospect of being victorious. After making these suppositions, he immediately adds, "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he can not be my disciple." Here we have the application of the two cases that he had just supposed. By them, he designed to tell all who heard him, how they could so enter on a religious life, as to endure to the end, and be saved ; how they could so build, as surely to finish—so fight, as inevitably to conquer : they must forsake all for Christ—give up all into his hands, and be ready to practice every act of self-denial to which the interests of his kingdom might call them. This was as much as to tell them, and all others, that whatever fair appearances any one's religion may have, it resembles the unfinished tower and the defeated army, if it is not based on a spirit of self-denial. *Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he can not be my disciple.* He may be in the church—may even enjoy high official rank and blameless reputation therein ;—but if he lack the grace of self-denial, he can not be my *disciple*.

This branch of experimental religion is supported by the word of God. There is much for it, and nothing against it. We have already seen that it is not contradicted by the doctrine of rewards, when that doctrine is rightly understood. It is true, the scriptures testify that wisdom's ways are *pleasantness*, and that all her paths are *peace* ; but this does not imply that no self-denial is required of those who tread those paths. Self-denial is not destructive of happiness. The Savior declares, "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold," (that is, in the present world,) "and shall inherit everlasting life." Matt. xix. 29. Self-denying actions, without a self-denying spirit, would be productive of no enjoyment ; but a self-denying spirit is the source of holy joy, even in the midst of privations and sufferings in the cause of Christ. The most self-denying servant of Christ, who has forsaken all, that he might

carry the news of gospel salvation to the heathen, has probably more of the presence of his Master and of the joys of his salvation, than what is enjoyed by his fellow servants who tarry at home. These sacrifices are not made for the sake of these higher joys, but rather from love to Christ and the souls of men; but Christ delights to honor those who honor him. Disinterested affections and actions prepare us for disinterested enjoyments; and such enjoyments are of a superior character; they are unspeakable, and full of glory.

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

First. Let us notice its harmony with other Articles of the present series. There is no want of agreement between this and any other of the Christian's experiences: but with some of them the agreement is very apparent. To these cases I shall confine my remarks.

This Article has a very manifest agreement with the *first*. That Article, the reader will remember, relates to benevolence, or universal good will. These two Articles are so much alike, that it may seem at first as if they were identically the same. There is, however, a perceptible difference between them. Love may be of an unselfish nature, even when it is exercised towards one's self. If the Deity had forever remained without a creation, his love to himself would have been of a holy, disinterested nature: but in this case, it could not have assumed the character of self-denial. If there had been no sin nor misery in the intelligent system, all would have been full of good will towards each other; but in this case, that modification of love, called self-denial, would probably have found no place for its exercise. It is of the nature of good will, to have a kind regard to the happiness of our fellow beings; and, in accordance with this, self-denial gives up some of its own enjoyment, for the sake of imparting to others more than it surrenders; thus increasing the common stock of happiness. It submits to suffer positive evil, for the purpose of removing a greater evil from those on whose account it consents to suffer. There is no harmony between disinterested benevolence, and that self-indulgent spirit which refuses to make sacrifices to promote the good of others. To this agree the words of the apostle John: "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" We are here taught that the man who is destitute of the spirit of self-denial, is also destitute of the spirit of benevolence—if he has no heart to make any sacrifice to promote his brother's happiness, he exhibits no evidence of possessing that love which is without dissimulation.

The harmony between this and the *third* Article is easily discovered. If our submission to God is restricted by selfish conditions, it does not accord with self-denial. But when the real language of the heart is, *Not as I will, but as thou wilt*, it entirely agrees with it. In this case, we submit to that suffering, which the glory of God and the interests of his kingdom, make it necessary we should endure.

Self-denial is in unison with repentance. The penitent condemns



all his selfish feelings and actions; and is ashamed to see how much he has made of his little self; but he has no shame on account of those feelings and actions, the motives of which have risen above self, and self-indulgence.

This grace of the Spirit has an evident agreement with humility, the subject of the *seventh* Article. Humility is a lowly feeling, in the exercise of which we do not think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. In the exercise of this lowliness of mind, it will be natural to deny ourselves for the glory of God and the good of our fellow men; while pride, which makes every thing of self, refuses to submit to personal sacrifices, either for the honor of the Creator, or the benefit of fellow creatures.

Secondly. The spirit of self-denial is in harmony with the *doctrinal* Articles. With some of them its agreement is very discernible. It is so with the *third*. The *law* requires that we love God with supreme regard, and our neighbors as ourselves. Were we to refuse to make those sacrifices of our own comforts, which His glory and their welfare demand, would it not be in contrariety to the spirit of the law?

In the *fourth* Article of doctrines, we were led to contemplate men as fallen, sinful, selfish creatures; and in the *eighth*, were led to view some of them as undergoing a fundamental change. And here, in this Article of experience, we discover one proof that this change is fundamental; the regenerated have now a heart to deny themselves, to further the gospel, and augment the happiness of a ruined world.

But there is no one of the Articles of our creed, with which the spirit of self-denial has such a manifest harmony, as the *fifth*, which relates to the infinite sacrifice which has been made for the redemption of men. It has already been shown, that in the exercise of self-denial we imitate the Son of God; and that without this, we have not his Spirit, and are none of his. Let us now take a view of this great sacrifice, as manifesting the spirit of self-denial in *God the Father*. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," (these are the words of the Son himself,) "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." One apostle, speaking on this subject, says, "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him for us all." Another says, "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." Did it cost the Father no self-denial to bruise his beloved Son, and make him an offering for sin? Why then is this insisted on as the highest expression of benevolence? It was love to an apostate world, which led him to send his Son to die for their redemption; "God so loved *the world*," &c. Was not the disinterestedness and strength of God's love put to a severe trial, when his infinitely dear Son fell down before him, and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me?"

Will any one attempt to undervalue this immense display of self-denial, by saying, The Father knew that his own glory, and the glory of his Son would be furthered by it? The display of self-denial was none the less great or disinterested on this account; and if it had not been consistent with the glory of the triune God, it would have been

incompatible with the divine holiness that it should ever have been made. Now surely, they who believe that God has practiced this self-denial; not sparing his own Son, but delivering him up for their redemption, must feel that it becomes them to deny themselves for the good of their brethren, and of their fellow men in general. An experience devoid of a self-denying spirit, would by no means correspond with the doctrine of man's redemption by the death of God's beloved Son.

A self-denying spirit is a good preparation for a reconciliation to the doctrine of sovereign grace, the doctrine of particular election, and that which exhibits a divine purpose and agency, as concerned in all things which are taking place through the universe. These doctrines do not make sure the happiness of every intelligent being, but they insure the greatest possible *amount* of happiness. To our selfish feelings these doctrines appear hard: and until we have a heart to practice self-denying duties, and submit to personal privations and sufferings, for the glory of God and the good of men, we are not prepared to see their consistency. The more we resemble the self-denying Savior, the more shall we delight in God's absolute sovereignty. Neither the Savior nor any of his disciples ever consented to suffer, because suffering was pleasant: nor did they ever rejoice that the things of the kingdom of God were hid from some, while revealed to others, because they were pleased with the sins and miseries of the reprobate. All that which is matter of rejoicing, in either case, is the good which is seen to result from the evil. The disciples of Christ consent to undergo sufferings, that God may be thereby glorified, and the interests of his kingdom advanced. With the same desirable object in view, they exercise submission to the will of God, in the final reprobation of those apostates, whom he has not seen fit to recover by his grace from the ruins of the fall.

#### REMARKS.

1. In the light of this essential Article of the experimental system, we discover another moral obstruction in the way of the sinner's conversion,—another reason why no man can come to the Son of God, except the Father draw him. A sinner, without being drawn of the Father, may be persuaded to read the word of God, to pray, to make a public profession of religion,—to perform any religious service, in short, which does not involve a denying of himself. He may do much for men and much for God, provided he can be allowed to make self-gratification his ultimate object. But to exchange this ultimate end for one of an entirely different character, is more than he will ever do, while he remains in unregeneracy. With a selfish heart, he can enjoy no fellowship with Christ; and until he is drawn of the Father, he has no disposition to come with any other than a selfish heart.

2. This Article furnishes instruction for awakened sinners who wish to be informed what they must do to be saved. I know it is proper to direct such, to exercise repentance for sin, and faith in Jesus Christ. But if their repentance and faith be of a selfish nature, they still re-

main in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. "If any man," said the Savior, "will come after me, *let him deny himself*, and take up his cross, and follow me." It is highly important that the anxious sinner should understand, what is the point of controversy between him and his Maker. It is precisely this,—Who shall be *God*? Who shall be supreme? Whose interest and glory shall be made the chief end of action—the Creator's, or the creature's? As soon as the sinner decides this question in favor of the Creator's claim, the controversy is at an end; and he is, in a moral sense, "a new creature;" since his ultimate end is entirely new.

3. Here is instruction for those who contemplate enrolling their names among the disciples of Christ. If they have a heart to deny themselves for Christ, let them go forward; but if not, let them remain without the pale of the church. Christ would have those who think of becoming his disciples, consider what they are about to undertake; he would have them count the cost of making a profession of his religion, to enable them to determine whether they shall be able to endure to the end. He lets them know, that unless they give him a higher place in their affections than they give to their nearest relatives, and even to their own selves—unless they forsake all for him, they can not be his disciples. Christ invites sinners of every class to come to him for salvation; but he invites none to become the members of his church, until they first have a heart to deny themselves for him and his cause. See Luke xiv. 25—33.

4. It is now easy to see why so many members of the visible church become apostates—why so many begin to build, who are not able to finish: they never denied themselves for Christ. Had they laid their foundation in self-denial, their house would have stood; had they ever given to Christ the throne of their hearts, he would have held it. All those who endure but for a time, however promising their outset may be, are wanting here: they never denied themselves—never loved Christ better than all things else. When they exchanged secular for religious pursuits, they did not exchange a selfish for an unselfish interest. Self, though in a new shape, was still their chief end. It is this enemy of Christ, which was concealed in the heart, that has caused the rupture. Should apostacies from the doctrine and precepts of Christ be multiplied ever so much, in this way they may all be accounted for: self-interest was never subordinated to the greater interests of the kingdom of God.



## ARTICLE XI.

THANKFULNESS TO GOD, AS THE SUPREME BENEFACITOR, IS A CHARACTERISTIC OF ALL HOLY CREATURES.

THANKFULNESS is not (like repentance, and some of the other graces of the Spirit,) confined to the religion of *men*. Angels, though they have no occasion for repentance, have much for thankfulness and praise. Hence the propriety of that requisition, "Praise ye him, all his *angels*; praise ye him, all his hosts." Ps. cxlviii. 2. This they do incessantly, as an expression of their unfeigned thankfulness. The inhabitants of earth, as well as of heaven, are required to be thankful. Both Testaments require this. In the Old Testament, the people of God are thus exhorted: "Be thankful unto him, and bless his name:"—and in the New, "Be ye thankful." Ps. c. 4. Col. iii. 15. One of the most unlovely features in the character of depraved men, is ingratitude; especially, their ingratitude to God, the *Supreme Benefactor*. "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, *neither were thankful*." It is said, that, in the perilous times which shall come in the latter days, men shall, among other things, be "*unthankful, unholy*." Rom. i. 21. 2 Tim. iii. 2. By comparing the two passages just referred to, we learn that thankfulness is enjoined upon all, as a thing essential to goodness of character; while an unthankful spirit is considered as irreligious and unholy. Thankfulness may be thus defined: *Unfeigned love to a benefactor, accompanied with a pleasing sense of our obligation to him for the goodness manifested in his benefactions*. It supposes such things as these:

1. That *benefits* have been received. "What," said thankful David, "shall I render unto the Lord for all his *benefits* towards me?" Ps. cxvi. 12. Were no favors conferred, no thankfulness would be demanded. Were it possible for an intelligent being to spring into existence independently of divine agency; and could such a being, in contemplating the character of God, have evidence that he possessed a benevolent heart, but none whatever that he had exhibited himself as a benefactor; a foundation would be laid for the exercise of *love*, but not of *thankfulness*.

I have said that thankfulness is to be exercised in view of *benefits*. Evils are to be cheerfully submitted to; but it is for good things alone that we are required to be thankful. If afflictions are ever spoken of in the scriptures as matter of praise, it is only when their *salutary influence* is brought directly before the mind. A child may be thankful for being punished, when he considers the good which his parent intended to effect by it. So may a child of God give thanks for the correction which has been made the means of bringing him back from his wanderings. In view of the salutary rod, he may say, "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in *faithfulness* hast afflicted me."

2. Thankfulness is exercised in view, not only of benefits, but also of a *benefactor*. We may be *glad* of benefits, even if we should consider them as coming to us by *chance*: but it is not possible we should be *grateful* for them, unless we consider them as bestowed upon us by some intelligent agent. An atheist may feel glad that there is such a luminary as the sun, to give light to the earth; that there is an atmosphere in which to breathe; and that the earth is filled with animals, vegetables, and other things adapted to the convenience of man: but he can be grateful to no one for all these benefits; for his creed (or rather his want of a creed) does not allow him to trace these streams of good back to their benevolent Fountain. No man can be under an obligation of gratitude to *chance*; for it is an essential attribute of that imaginary agent, that it has no intelligence and no design. To be thankful to *God*, we must believe that such a being exists; that he is intelligent and good; that the blessings we enjoy are his gift—the expressions of his loving kindness. “O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is *good*.” Ps. cxxxvi. 1. When a gift is not viewed as an expression of the goodness of the giver, however glad we may be to receive it, we can not, in the truest sense, be thankful; for thankfulness implies the exercise of complacency, not only in the benefaction, but also in the benefactor. The Psalmist was not only pleased with having his prayer answered, but was pleased with Him who had answered it; for he said, “I love the *Lord*, because he hath heard my voice, and my supplications.” Ps. cxvi. 1. But how can we love any one for bestowing a gift, unless we believe that benevolent feelings prompted him to do it? It is certain that we can exercise no true thankfulness to God, unless we view the blessings he bestows as expressions of his benevolence,—unless we can, in a believing manner, adopt the words of holy David, “The Lord *is good*, and *doeth good*.”

3. A thankful heart recognizes God as the author of all its blessings, whatever may have been the instrumentality through which they are received. It does not look upon him in the light of a common benefactor, or of one who confers only a part of the blessings enjoyed; but it views him as the bountiful Giver that bestows them *all*—as the being “from whom cometh down *every* good and perfect gift.” It is true that we have other benefactors. Nor does the scripture forbid us to be grateful to them for all the good they do us. But God is to be acknowledged as the SUPREME BENEFACITOR, from whom, either directly or indirectly, flow all our streams of comfort.

Ought we to be any less thankful to God for our daily bread, which he gives us by means of the fertility of the earth, than if it were to be sent us directly from heaven? Our bread, when obtained in the ordinary way, comes directly from the earth, and by means of labor performed by ourselves and our beasts. But let us inquire, Who gave the earth its fertile nature, and covered it with all the vegetable and animal tribes? or who gave the ox his strength and his patience to labor? or who gives to man his skill and power, not only to labor, but also to control and direct the whole operation? Why should we consider ourselves any less obliged to the Supreme Agent, when he aids us by instruments, than when he does it without them? Does the use he makes of our own instrumentality to help ourselves, diminish, in

the least degree, our obligation to him? In case he sees the favor will be greater to us, to be obtained by our own, rather than by any other instrumentality, then, instead of diminishing, it must enhance the obligation. If, under our present circumstances, it be better for us to eat our bread by the sweat of our face, than to have it rained down around our dwellings, or placed upon our tables, more thanks are due to our heavenly Benefactor for giving it to us in this way.

When any of our favors come to us directly from the hands of our fellow men, as the fruit of their concern for our welfare, we are, without doubt, under obligation to be grateful to them; but this should not diminish aught of our gratitude to God, from whom they received all their *ability* and *disposition* to help us. Thus Paul evidently viewed the matter, when he said to the Corinthians, "Thanks be to God, who put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you." 2 Cor. viii. 16. The apostle felt grateful for the favor which they had received by the instrumentality of Titus; he also admired that earnest care for their best interests, which was manifested by this servant of Christ; but he most heartily thanked God, both for the favor itself, and also for that earnest care manifested by the man whom he had used as his instrument in conferring it.

They who have a grateful spirit, will feel under obligation to be thankful to God at all times, and for all things—that is, for all favors. Such is the apostolic direction to the Ephesians: "Giving thanks always for all things unto God." Eph. v. 20. In the exercise of grateful emotions, David exclaims, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits!" He no doubt meant by this, to charge his soul to forget *none* of the Lord's benefits, but to be grateful for them *all*. It also implied a determination to keep his mind awake to the discovery of new causes of gratitude. The work of creation presents innumerable objects to excite thankful emotions; and the work of providence furnishes claims to our gratitude, which are still more wonderful and glorious. The earth, when contemplated geographically as a terraqueous globe, is full of the riches of goodness; but when contemplated as a scene of God's moral government, and of the glorious work of redemption, the causes for gratitude and praise become more numerous and more affecting. There is one of these mercies, which is greater than all those of the other class taken together. It was this which led to the exclamation, *Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.* 2 Cor. ix. 15.

Benefits, which are secured by promises, furnish the same ground for thankfulness as those which are already received. When, in Rom. vii. 25, the apostle says, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord," he renders thanks for a future blessing, which he clearly saw was made sure by the covenant of grace. In the epistle to the saints at Colosse, he says, "We give thanks to God—for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven." Col. i. 3, 5. Their heaven was secured to them by promise, (if they were, indeed, the saints of the Lord,) and though they had not come into possession of their inheritance, yet in prospect of it, he and his brethren were even now employed in giving thanks to God.

4. It is important to be distinctly noticed, that thankfulness, such



as is the fruit of the Spirit, is *not restricted to the favors which are conferred on ourselves and our friends*, but is also drawn forth by the favors which are bestowed on others. Gratitude is not of a selfish nature, any more than self-denial. It loves God for all the favors he bestows on fellow creatures, both in this and other worlds, (as far as it becomes known,) and feels itself laid under obligation to praise him for all this profusion of his goodness.

Every display of the Creator's glory is a favor to the intelligent creation, particularly to that part which is holy; therefore every new display serves to increase the obligation of creatures to be thankful. It seems hardly proper to *thank* the Lord for being what he is, that is, infinitely great and good; since it would suppose he might have been otherwise than infinitely great and good;—which supposition is inadmissible. It is proper, however, to *rejoice* in God for being what he necessarily is, and to render thanks to him for all the manifestations of his goodness, which he has made for the benefit of his creatures, and the gratification of his own benevolent feelings. Every intelligent creature is under obligation to thank him for all the goodness he has manifested, so far as its manifestation shall come to his knowledge. Each is bound to give thanks in behalf of all the rest; for he is required to love them all as he does himself. In view of this manifestation of divine goodness, heaven and earth are called on to praise the Lord: "Praise ye him, all his angels." "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord."

That we are under obligation to be thankful for blessings which are bestowed on *others*, as well as for those granted to ourselves, is evident. Paul appeared to be as unfeignedly thankful for favors conferred on others, as for those he himself received. In his epistle to the Corinthians, he says, "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace which is given you by Jesus Christ:"—to the Philippians, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel, from the first day until now:"—to the Thessalonians, "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth." He was unfeignedly thankful for the good accomplished by the instrumentality of other men, as well as for that which was accomplished by his own. To the Colossians he writes, "We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and the love which ye have to all the saints." Merely to hear of their faith, and love, and hope, drew forth his gratitude and praise to God. The holy angels give us an example of disinterested gratitude, in the song of praise which they sang at the birth of the Redeemer. They needed not his redemption; but they rejoiced in this manifestation of God's good will towards *men*: and they now rejoice over every sinner that repenteth.

5. Thankfulness not only supposes favors received, but also that these favors are *unmerited*, that is, that they are such favors as could not be claimed on the ground of justice. When the lender receives back his loan, it is a real favor; but it is not of such a nature as to

bring him under the obligation of *gratitude* to the borrower. Let me receive ever so many good things of another, if I give him an equivalent for them, (as in the case of commerce,) there is no debt of gratitude lying on me, any more than if I had not received them.

If *servitude* be considered in any instance as a lawful thing, (and in the case of minors, and criminals who have forfeited their liberty, its lawfulness will not be disputed,) it will be obvious, that servants have no claim to *thanks* from their masters, for the most perfect faithfulness in their service. “Doth he *thank* that servant,” said the divine Teacher, “because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.” Luke xvii. 9. If the *servant* be the property of his master, so are his *services*: they are the master’s due. While, therefore, they deserve to be *approved*, they can lay no claim to *thanks*. Creatures are servants to their Creator, in the highest possible sense. They are his property complete, and are therefore bound to honor him with all the powers they possess. The children of men are bound to glorify him in their body and spirit, which are *His*. Those creatures who do this to perfection, deserve and will receive his entire approbation; and they who do it imperfectly, but sincerely, will, through the atonement and advocacy of the Redeemer, be acknowledged with a *well done good and faithful servants*. But creatures, whether imperfect or perfect, have no claim to *thanks* from God. He receives nothing from them except that which he has first given them: and their entire love and obedience are his *due*, and are therefore most properly termed their *duty*. “When ye have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our *duty* to do.”

While no thanks are due from the Creator to his creatures, they are under obligation to be thankful to Him for all the good which has hitherto been enjoyed, and which his promise assures them will yet be enjoyed in the creation; for all this good is unmerited favor; it is that for which there was no claim. Our very existence depended on his good pleasure; and this is clearly a favor of such a nature, that we could have no claim to it before it was conferred. In the hundredth Psalm, which seems to have been composed on purpose to excite gratitude to God, this is mentioned as one reason for its exercise:—“It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves.” Angels that never sinned, are bound to give thanks for their existence, their rational natures, and their preservation from apostacy. When these sinless creatures, in the day of the revelation of God’s righteous judgment, shall stand acquitted, their obligation to gratitude will differ, in some respects, from theirs, who receive a free justification by faith in the Redeemer. They will not be under obligation to give thanks for their acquittal, since they could not have been condemned, in consistence with justice: but they will be under obligation to give thanks to Him, who had long before made them to differ from the angels which sinned, in upholding them by his free Spirit: while believers in Christ will be under obligation to give thanks for every thing—their existence—the atonement provided for them as fallen creatures—a heart to accept of this provision—and justification unto life after this provision had been accepted.

There is a manifest contrast among the works of God, and it seems designed to make the impression deep on the minds of intelligent creatures, that the good which any of them enjoy, is what could not have been justly claimed by them at the hand of their Creator, but is wholly the effect of his sovereign goodness. The first contrast which strikes the mind, is between having and not having, a place in the creation. Why, each one of us may say, am I made to differ from non-entity? or, in other words, why do I exist? The answer is, The Creator, according to his good pleasure, saw fit to give me existence. Why am I endowed with reason? It is God our Maker, "who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven." What a contrast there is between creatures which belong to the intelligent system; for example—between those which kept, and those which kept not their first estate. Again—what a contrast there is between apostates. For one part, a Redeemer has been provided, and mercy's door thrown open, inviting their return; while another part, without a second probation, are reserved in chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Between those of our race to whom the word of salvation is sent, and those to whom it is not sent, the contrast is great. And who can conceive what a contrast there is, and ever will be, between those to whom it is given to know, in a saving manner, the mysteries of the kingdom of God, and those to whom it is not given! Matt. xiii. 11. Of every one among those who are blessed with favorable distinctions, of whatever kind, the demand with propriety may be made, "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" 1 Cor. iv. 7. The amount of good enjoyed by the whole is, no doubt, the greatest it could be; and the uneven distribution of it is dictated by infinite benevolence, under the guidance of that wisdom which can not err. In view of this arrangement, every intelligent creature is bound, not only to be submissive, but also to rejoice and give thanks.

In view of these affecting contrasts, to which I have alluded, let no one impute iniquity to God. As there is no wrong done to those ideal creatures which might have had existence if it had pleased the Creator; nor to those sentient creatures which he did not see fit to endow with reason; so there is no wrong done to those subjects of moral government which he did not prevent from apostatizing; nor to those apostate angels for whom no Savior has been provided; nor to those of the children of Adam who are suffered to continue in their gentile state, and serve the gods they have chosen; nor to those gospel sinners, who are bidden to the marriage, and yet refuse the invitation, and so never taste of the supper.

Thankfulness is an affection of the heart, and therefore we class it with the experimental system; but it is an affection which, like all others, tends to discover itself. If we can not express our sense of obligation to our benefactor, by requiting his kindness, we shall wish at least to express to him our grateful emotions, and the conviction we have of the obligations under which his goodness has laid us. Thankfulness to God leads to thanksgiving and praise. With hearts enlarged with the spirit of love and gratitude, it is perfectly natural that the



giving of thanks should constitute a very material part of our worship. And this is manifestly what God expects from us. "Be careful for nothing," (saith the Holy Ghost in Paul,) "but in every thing by prayer and supplication, *with thanksgiving*, let your requests be made known unto God." A thankful spirit will lead us to call on others to praise the Lord. How repeatedly does the sweet singer of Israel express his devout wish, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men. See Ps. cvii. 8, 15, 21, 31. Ps. xxxiv. 3. See also five or six of the last of the Psalms entire.

It is a prominent object of this essay, to show that every part of the religion contained in the word of truth, is in itself right and fit; that it is supported by the whole weight of divine testimony; and that there is no discord between the different parts. And surely, all this will most strictly apply to the Article which is now under consideration. Thankfulness to God, our Supreme Benefactor, is manifestly a suitable affection of the heart; and the reverse of it is not less unreasonable than impious. The scriptures every where inculcate a spirit of thankfulness towards benefactors, especially towards that Benefactor from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift. And there can be no doubt entertained concerning the agreement between this and all the other parts of divine truth, whether experimental, doctrinal, or practical. Its agreement with the whole system may be learned from the following sketch.

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

First. It is in harmony with the other branches of *Christian Experience*.

Some may think that thankfulness, when exercised in view of favors which have been conferred on *ourselves*, must be of a selfish nature, and therefore at variance with the *first* Article of this series, which represents all genuine religion of the heart to consist in disinterested affections. It is acknowledged that there is a thing called *thankfulness*, which is wholly of a selfish nature; but that is not the affection which the scriptures thus denominate, and which it has been the object of this Article to describe. That thankfulness which forms a part of the Christian character, is not pleased with the giver, unless his gift be considered as the fruit of benevolence; and when it is thus considered, it is grateful for all his gifts, on whomsoever they may have been conferred. Surely, it is not necessary to suppose that we are selfish, merely because we are thankful to God for the favors which he bestows on ourselves and our friends. If we were not thankful for them, it would be a decided proof of selfishness and hardness of heart. While we are bound to be thankful to God for *all* his favors, it is with these that we are best acquainted, and therefore they impose on us a very special debt of gratitude. Every man is as much bound to render a tribute of thanksgiving for his *own mercies*, as he is to pay his *own debts*.

The present Article accords with the *second*. The complacence

we have in benevolent beings, renders easy the exercise of gratitude towards them, when they display the amiableness of their character in works of beneficence. In proportion as we delight ourselves in the Lord, the Supreme Benefactor, it will become natural to us to give him thanks for those unnumbered benefits with which we are daily loaded. Its agreement with the *third* is no less evident; for if we can love our Father with the correcting rod in his hand, it will not be hard to love and praise him when he assumes the place of a benefactor and showers his blessings around us. That temper of heart which prepared the prodigal son for the most unconditional submission to paternal authority, was a good preparation for the exercise of gratitude, in view of all that exuberance of kindness which was shown him on his return to his father's house.

Repentance and faith, which are treated on in the *next two* Articles, are certainly not discordant with the spirit of thankfulness. A heart which is under the dominion of sin, can be *glad* of the favors which God bestows, while it is an utter stranger to that thankfulness which he requires: but repentance for sin will always open the heart to the exercise of this precious grace. And what can more evidently harmonize with it than *faith*, whose province it is to realize an invisible God as ever present, controlling every event, and giving us richly all things to enjoy? It is also the province of faith to receive and depend upon the almighty Redeemer, who is the appointed channel for the communication of all other blessings. A true *believer* in Jesus Christ can not be destitute of gratitude. He that is unthankful, is also unbelieving.

The grace described in this Article, has a manifest agreement with *hope*. It is the province of hope to contemplate that good which is in prospect; and it is a good which exceeds all we can ask or think. In view of this unbounded mercy, grateful hearts are prepared to say, We give thanks to God for the hope which is laid up for us in heaven. Col. i. 3, 5.

With the grace of *humility*, thankfulness has a connection which is very intimate. Were we once divested of pride, it would prepare the way for a constant flow of gratitude. It is not owing to a deficiency of mercies and blessings, that we are not very thankful creatures; and that we are not so continually. Pride makes us imagine we deserve much better things than we enjoy. They who walk humbly with God will see matter for gratitude and praise, where proud spirits will think they do well to be angry. Indeed, the grand cause why heaven will be so much more full of thankfulness than earth, is to be attributed to the greater humility of its inhabitants, rather than to the greater number of its blessings.

Secondly. Passing by the other Articles of experimental religion, with which the present Article can certainly have no disagreement, I shall now turn to the *doctrinal* series.

Thankfulness has nothing atheistical in it; for while it receives favors, it is disposed to acknowledge the hand from which they come. It therefore accords with our *first* Article; That, there is a God infinitely intelligent and kind. Gratitude contemplates the created universe as a favor, which depended on the will of Him who is from

everlasting ; and through this manifestation of his goodness, it is led to the enjoyment of Him who is its all-sufficient source.

But if we were to leave out of our creed the *second* and *last* Articles in the series, there would be no foundation on which to build our obligation to the exercise of thankfulness. If the good which is brought to us by the existence of such a world, and by such a course of events, is not the fruit of the benevolent design and mighty operation of Jehovah, then no reason can be shown why he should receive our thanks for all the good which is derived from the existence of this world and this course of events. If we have a single favor which he did not design to bestow, or which he has not actually bestowed upon us, either by his own hand, or by such an instrument as he chose to make use of, then gratitude is not due to Him for such a favor. Not a few of our favors come to us from the hands of creatures that are destitute of benevolence. Now if we do not believe that God rules the hearts of such, as well as of others, we must hesitate in rendering thanks to him for this class of benefits. It appears that Ezra had no such hesitancy in blessing the God of his fathers, for putting it into the heart of a heathen prince to beautify the house of the Lord. See Ez. vii. 27. They who have any true gratitude to God for the existence of intelligent creatures, are also grateful to him for establishing a moral government over them, and for giving them such a pure and perfect law as that which he has revealed in the sacred scriptures. [See Part I. Art. III.] They are thankful for it as the basis of divine government, and as that which is essential to the existence of a holy and blessed society among intelligent beings, whether on earth or in heaven.

If, in the lively exercise of gratitude, we look at the rebellion of angels and men, we shall exclaim, How wrong thus to despise the goodness of God ! What an immense evil to be left destitute of his image and favor to all eternity ! But when we proceed to take a view of the work of redemption, which excels every other work of God in glory, our gratitude is not diminished by our knowledge of that dreadful apostacy. [See Part I. Art. iv. and v.] When the apostle was taking a connected view of these two doctrines, the *apostacy*, and the *redemption* of man, he exclaimed, “ God be thanked that ye were servants of sin ; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.” Rom. vi. 17.

The Christian’s thankfulness is promoted by that view of truth which is presented in the *sixth* Article. The proffer of eternal life on terms so gracious, demands eternal gratitude and praise. And since he fully believes the humiliating doctrine contained in the *seventh*, his heart is enlarged with thankfulness to God for causing that infinitely desirable change, which forms the subject of the *eighth*. When he takes a view of this change as being not according to his works, but according to God’s own purpose and grace which were given him in Christ Jesus before the world began, it has a wonderful effect to enlarge his heart to give thanks to God for his unmerited and distinguishing grace. [See Part I. Art. ix. and x.]

A free justification by faith in the Redeemer, and a covenant ensuring the continuance of the gracious operations of the Spirit in the renovated heart, (which subjects furnish the matter of the *eleventh* and



*twelfth* Articles,) contribute very much to augment the thankfulness of the heirs of promise.

There is a sweet harmony between those grateful emotions which the Spirit of God has enkindled in the hearts of the saints, and that heavenly state for which they are designed, and which was treated of in the *thirteenth* Article. These grateful emotions will prepare them to join in the song of Moses and the Lamb: but devoid of these, they would have no meetness for the employments of the heavenly world. The unthankful and unholy, (and this is the character of all the unregenerate,) are wholly unmeet for heaven; and except their character shall become essentially altered, they must be excluded from the world of praise.

## REMARKS.

1. The practice of giving thanks at our meals, is as rational as it is scriptural. It is the natural dictate of a grateful heart. Without food, our animal natures can not be sustained; and without the care of our heavenly Father, we can not be supplied with food. How suitable is it, that creatures who know whence they receive these supports, should, in connection with their reception, expressly acknowledge their Benefactor, and not eat until they have given him thanks. When all the families of the earth shall become thankful for their daily bread, they will spontaneously imitate the example of the primitive Christians, and of Christ their supreme Pattern, in connecting an open acknowledgment of God with their social meals. See Rom. xiv. 6. Acts xxvii. 35. John vi. 11.

2. There seems, also, a manifest propriety in the observance of a public Thanksgiving, after the fruits of the earth have been gathered into our barns and store-houses. Of this nature, was the feast of tabernacles in the ancient church. Moses, among other directions he gave to Israel before his death, said, "Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and wine. Thou shalt rejoice in thy feast—because the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy increase, and in all the works of thy hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice." Deut. xvi. 13—15. When the productions of the earth are gathered in, we are presented with all the provisions, on which both men and beasts depend for their sustenance till the return of another harvest: and though they are gathered from a multitude of fields, and deposited in many different store-houses, they are received from the hand of one common Benefactor; and do they not claim one common acknowledgment of thankful praise?—While we return thanks for the fruits of the earth, we should not forget the obligations we are laid under, by all our natural and civil advantages; and more especially our gospel privileges. If the meat that perisheth demands a thank-offering at our hand, how much more, that which endureth unto everlasting life.

While a public thanksgiving seems to be a proper expression of gratitude for common mercies, is it not a manifest perversion of such a day, (a day designed as a religious feast—a time of general and public acknowledgment of our indebtedness to God,) to devote its hours

to gluttonous indulgence and boisterous revelry?—to turn it into an unhallowed festival, in which God and his worship can have no place? Thus have those anniversary thanksgivings, which our puritan fathers instituted for the purpose of honoring God, been sometimes perverted; so that instead of an additional revenue of praise, he has received new provocations to turn away his face from us, and to curse even our blessings.

3. This Article suggests one important use which should be made of historical reading; and that is, to excite gratitude to God. In the hundred-and-fourth Psalm, we observe David reading the book of nature, to excite gratitude to the God of nature; and in the next Psalm, we see him reading the book of Providence, to stir up his grateful feelings towards the God of providence. History, when a statement of facts, makes us acquainted with events which God has brought to pass: and since the earth is full of his mercy, these historic events, if properly examined, must furnish new reasons for thankfulness. Were history to be written in the spirit of piety, it would illustrate that declaration of the Psalmist: "One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts." Ps. cxlv. 4.\* In reading the history of our own country, it ought to be no secondary object, to impress our hearts with a sense of the goodness in which God has passed before our nation; whereby he has laid us under immense obligation to be a grateful people.

Every individual ought frequently to review the events of his own life, for the purpose of exciting gratitude towards the Author of all his blessings. How innumerable are the mercies and deliverances which we have all experienced. Surely, goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our life.

"T is to His care we owe our breath,  
And all our near escapes from death."

*The means of grace with which God has furnished us, lay us under greater obligation than all our temporal blessings. How greatly augmented, then, are our obligations, provided we have received *grace itself*! And every new supply of grace enhances our obligation to be thankful.*

4. With this topic in view, we gather new proof of the baseness of our fallen nature; as being devoid of thankfulness to the Supreme benefactor. It is a common remark, that ingratitude is so base a crime, that no one was ever found willing to acknowledge himself guilty of it. But it is an undeniable fact, that mankind are, by nature, entirely ungrateful to Him, from whom all their favors are ultimately received. The Holy Ghost has testified of this fallen world; "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, *neither were thankful.*" While men are influenced by the laws of politeness to thank each other for the smallest favors, they seem to feel under no obligation to give thanks to Him, who gave them being, and who gives them all things richly to enjoy. They can pass by the cross without one grateful emotion. God's unspeakable gift excites no thankfulness.

\* For an example of a history written in this manner, I would refer the reader to Trumbull's History of Connecticut.

## ARTICLE XII.

HOLY MEDITATION IS A PART OF INTERNAL RELIGION WITH WHICH ALL THE CHILDREN OF GOD ARE FAMILIAR.

By meditation, is meant something more than that involuntary and random exercise of the thinking faculty, which is common to all. All minds think, but all can not, with strict propriety, be said to meditate. There are those, whose minds seem to glance at nearly every thing, and to dwell intently upon nothing. Meditation denotes that musing, that *applying* of the mind to thought, which is the result of a deep interest in the subject of contemplation. And *holy* meditation means that musing about God, eternity, and other sacred themes, which is accompanied with corresponding affections of heart—which is engaged in because it affords delight. To constitute one's meditations holy, it is not enough that he contemplates sacred subjects: he must love to contemplate them, and that because they are most in unison with his moral taste. Meditation, in the scriptural sense, includes one kind of prayer, namely, that which consists in silent aspirations to the Father of our spirits. It is very natural for holy minds, while they are contemplating his being, works and word, to mingle such devout breathings with their contemplations. See Ps. v. 1, 2. I place meditation in the experimental system; for, whether it consist in thoughts of God, or unexpressed petitions to him, it is secret, being known only to Him and ourselves.

This mental exercise is not peculiar to eminent Christians, but is common to all that love God. They do not restrict it to holy times, places, or employments; but extend it to all the days of the week, all the places where they go, and all the employments in which they engage. The subjects on which their thoughts most naturally dwell, are those which relate to God. But since these assertions may be disputed, it will be expedient to show;—that holy meditation is required—that it is practicable—that means are to be employed to promote it—and that it holds no unimportant place in Christian experience.

1. Holy meditation, as the stated employment of our thinking powers, is *required* of us. Paul, in writing to his son Timothy, says, "Meditate upon these things;" (i. e. the things relating to the kingdom of God;) "give thyself wholly to them." It will, perhaps, be said, that this command was given to a minister of the word, whose office in the church obliged him to make the subject of religion the whole business of his life. We find, however, a similar command given to Joshua, whose business it was to lead the armies of Israel, and to administer their civil government. To him it was said, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but *thou shalt meditate therein day and night.*" Josh. i. 8. The same thing is, in effect, enjoined on every man, when it is said, "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long." Prov. xxiii. 17. It is difficult to tell how we can be all the day long in the fear of the Lord, unless we have him much in our thoughts.



2. Constant meditation on divine things is *practicable*. Had it not been practicable, it would not have been required. And let me ask, what there is to render it impossible to comply with this requisition. The business of this life can be pursued, without its driving from our minds the thoughts of God, and of the life to come. We can think of God, when we are alone, and when we are in company; when we lie down, and when we rise up; when we go out, and when we come in; when we are in our own, or in a foreign land. To keep divine meditations in our minds, while our hands are employed in worldly business, nothing more is needed, than that we estimate the things of this life and the things of the life to come, according to their comparative importance. Let the things of the life to come be considered as the edifice, and the things of this life as nothing but the temporary scaffolding, on which we are to stand until the edifice be completed; and then it will not be difficult to keep the things of eternity uppermost in our thoughts, at all times. When Christ enjoined it on his hearers, to lay up their treasure in heaven, he told them that where their treasure was, there their heart would be also. Matt. vi. 21.

Men who are living without God in the world, have commonly some particular subject which engrosses the most of their thoughts. The warrior is ever thinking of battles and victories. The thoughts of the politician dwell on the political concerns of the nation; and are much employed in devising means to raise himself or his favorites to preferment. The worldling is ever musing on his gains and losses, and is contriving how, in future, he may gain without losing. The scholar's mind is absorbed with his scientific attainments, and with the prospect of his rising to eminence in the literary world. And the man of pleasure thinks of scarcely anything but his sports and sensual gratifications. These men may all of them have some thoughts on other topics; but each one has his own all-absorbing topic, towards which, as to a centre, his thoughts are always gravitating.

And now I ask, What subject should we expect would, above all others, employ the thoughts of the *godly* man? Where is his treasure? Is it not in heaven? Then his heart will be there also. Does he not *delight* in the law of the Lord? If so, will he not meditate in that law day and night? Are his meditations on the things of God sweet? Then these will be his chosen meditations, at home and abroad, by day and by night.

That such a constancy of meditation on divine things is practicable, is made certain by the fact, that it has actually been exemplified. King David had as much of the business of earth to fill his thoughts, as any other man; yet we hear him say to God, "I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches." "Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word." Nor were such thoughts confined to the night watches; for we hear him exclaim, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation *all the day*." This implies, that through the avocations of the day, the law of God was the great subject which employed his thoughts.

Now that which has been done by one of the children of God, and by one whose situation was uncommonly difficult, may be done by them

all. What David tells us concerning his own meditations, he applies to all the other friends of God. In the first Psalm, he makes this assertion concerning every man of piety: "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night." How could a constancy of holy meditation be more emphatically expressed? And notice, such meditation is not here introduced merely as a thing incumbent, but as a duty which is actually performed; and that by all such as delight in God's law.\*

3. Means are to be employed in promoting holy meditation. Some of the more important of these, I will now suggest.

1st. Let us impress upon our minds this truth, that wherever we are, at home or abroad, *there God is*: that the works around us are *his creation*, and that the events which are passing under our eye, are parts of *his providence*. We can hardly believe that God is omnipresent, and not think of him. Though absent friends may sometimes be forgotten, we certainly can not help thinking of them, when they are in our presence. When David composed the 104th Psalm, he saw God in every object, and in every event. He was led to exclaim, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works: in wisdom hast thou made them all." No wonder that this view of God and his works, should lead him to say, "My meditation of him shall be sweet."

2dly. Holy meditation is greatly promoted by the frequent reading and hearing of God's word. "Thy testimonies," said the Psalmist, "are my meditation." Again he said, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." Ps. cxix. 97, 99. That protracted Psalm, in which we find these passages, seems to be wholly made up of those meditations for which the scriptures had furnished the materials. They were originated and cherished by a familiar acquaintance with this repository of truth. The word gives rise to all the believer's spiritual meditations. It is true that he meditates on the *works* of God; but it is by the light reflected from his *word*, that he discovers the glory of his works. They who desire to meditate much on God, will often look into his word, and will greatly prize the ministration of it; and, of course, they will love the habitation of his house, and every place where his word is faithfully dispensed. Those who desire to have God much in their thoughts, through the week, will not fail to be in his house on the Sabbath.

3dly. *Prayer* is of immense importance in assisting holy meditation. In the 19th Psalm, there is a petition adapted to this particular subject: "Let the words of my mouth, and *the meditation of my heart*, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and Redeemer." It is as proper to pray God, that the meditation of our heart may be acceptable in his sight, as to pray, that the words of our mouth and the actions of our life, may be so. And prayer is one of the most important means which can be used, to give a right direction to our thoughts, words, and actions. Pious meditation is greatly promoted by secret ejaculations; and, indeed, such ejaculations constitute the most interesting part of the exercise. The meditations of which the

\* An aged Christian, with whom I once had conversation on experimental religion, told me, that for many years, he believed there had not been *three minutes* together, when the thoughts of God and divine things had been out of his mind.

119th Psalm is composed, appear to have been accompanied with many fervent aspirations, or short, disconnected petitions, which silently ascended to God from the altar of a devout heart. It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, that these precious thoughts and holy breathings should not be lost to the Church. By them we are taught, not only what were the meditations of the man after God's own heart, but also by what methods we ourselves may have those of a like character.

4thly. Habitual meditation on divine things may be aided, by a special consecration of certain portions of our time to this exercise. We are informed that Isaac went out into the field to meditate at eventide. Gen. xxiv. 63. The time and the place selected by him, were both favorable to devout contemplation. It is mentioned in the Life of President Edwards, that, when he was the minister of Northampton, he was in the habit of resorting to retired groves in the vicinity, for the purpose of meditation. It is also stated, that these were found by him to be very profitable seasons. Baxter, in his book entitled "The Saints' Rest," urges the duty of meditation, and the importance of devoting some special seasons to it. These special seasons, besides being in themselves precious, will exert an influence to keep the mind in a frame of holy meditation, even when we are occupied with worldly business.

4. Holy meditation holds no unimportant place in the experiences of the Christian. To promote and improve it, is an object worthy of engaging much of his attention.

(1.) It is necessary to render us objects of delight to our Maker. He witnesses all which is passing in our minds. He understands our thoughts afar off. And with what displeasure must he look upon those intelligent creatures, whom he has made capable of contemplating his glorious perfections, and meditating in his law day and night, when he sees, that, so far from doing this, they are utter strangers to pious contemplation—that God is not in all their thoughts. On the other hand, must it not be pleasing to Him who searches all hearts, to see his creatures employed in devoutly contemplating those manifestations of his glory, which he has made in his works and in his word? Must he not have been pleased with that devout man, who could appeal to him and say, "I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands!" Ps. cxliii. 5. His saints must be objects of peculiar delight, when he sees their heart so intently fixed, that neither a press of business, nor a throng of company, can drive him from their thoughts.

(2.) Spiritual meditations constitute a good preparation for many other duties.

They are a good preparation for *prayer*. Like the sacred fire that was ever burning upon the altar, ready to consume every sacrifice which should be laid upon it, so it is with holy meditation. The man who ever keeps this fire burning upon the altar of his heart, will be always prepared to engage in prayer. See Lev. vi. 13.

Meditation is a good preparative to *spiritual and profitable discourse*. It is when the heart is inditing a good matter, that the tongue is like the pen of a ready writer. Ps. xlv. 1. What can be more natural, than to talk of that which is uppermost in our minds? If the meditations of our heart are acceptable in the sight of God, so will be the



words of our mouth. We are at a loss for spiritual discourse, just in proportion as our minds are destitute of spiritual meditations.

Meditation on God and divine things, prepares us to *resist temptation*. If, by this exercise, we set the Lord always before us, we shall not be moved. See Ps. xvi. 8.

Meditation in God's *word*, has a tendency to prepare us to *obey all the precepts* which it enjoins. When Joshua was commanded to meditate in the book of the law, day and night, this reason was given to enforce the command; "That thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein." Without this exercise, the heart can not be kept with all diligence: and what can be more important than a diligent keeping of the heart; since it is the fountain from which proceed all our words and actions.

(3.) Holy meditation is very useful in promoting our *improvement and enjoyment*, both mental and moral.

The *improvement* of our minds and hearts, is a thing of great importance; and this depends very much on the kind of thoughts which commonly occupy them. Thoughts about worldly things are sometimes necessary, to enable us to transact that business which religion itself requires us to do. But it is undesirable that our minds should be taken up with these things, any more than is requisite for the transaction of that business; since they are not expanded and purified by secular thoughts, as they are by those which relate more immediately to heavenly things. How can that mind be much improved, or greatly assimilated to heaven, whose thoughts are all confined to the things of earth? Had the Psalmist regarded nothing but the expansion of his own mind, he might with propriety have said, *I hate vain thoughts*. They who are meditating in the law of God day and night, are doing that which constitutes a preparation for the heavenly state; and their cherishing such meditations, seems to be one thing that is implied in their being in the posture of servants, waiting for the coming of their Lord. Surely, they who are not so much as thinking of Christ and the concerns of his kingdom, have not their loins girded about and their lights burning; ready to open unto their Lord, whenever he shall knock. See Luke xii. 35, 36.

Meditation on divine things contributes much to our mental and moral *enjoyment*. "My meditation of Him shall be *sweet*," said one of the highly favored children of God: and so will all those say, who truly bear the image of their Maker. They all love God; and therefore they are made happy by thinking of him. They all delight in his word; and therefore they take pleasure in meditating in it, day and night. Much of the happiness of the men of grace, arises from holy meditation. They can not always be in the sanctuary, nor at the domestic altar, nor in the closet; they can not always have the Bible in their hand, nor be in the company of the saints; but when there is a suspension of the enjoyment of these privileges, they can still have the comfort of thinking on God and divine things. This is a kind of perpetual feast, which may last all the day, and all the week.

The question here presents itself—Is meditation on God and divine things, a certain evidence of a renewed heart? One thing is clear; that a destitution of such meditations is an evidence of a graceless

heart. It is concerning the wicked man—him who, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God, that the declaration is made, *God is not in all his thoughts*. It is not possible that God should be the supreme object of our affection, and not be the subject of many of our thoughts. Can it be that we prefer Jerusalem above our chief joy, and yet so far forget her interests as scarcely to have a thought concerning them? Can our treasure be in heaven, and our hearts be on the earth? On the other hand, could we know concerning any individual, that, through all his life, his thoughts had been much employed on divine subjects; this, if not counteracted by forbidding circumstances, would induce us to place him among the pious. Yet this alone would not be sufficient evidence of his piety; for there are other things, besides a relish for religion, which may turn a man's thoughts to divine subjects. Mere legal convictions will do it; and such convictions are not unfrequently protracted for months—sometimes, even for years. But those meditations on religious subjects, to which unrenewed men are impelled by the fear of future misery, are as destitute of holiness, as *those* will be, which they will have when actually enduring that misery. Their contemplations of God will then, as now, be painful, and against their will: they will not be able to divert their thoughts from their miseries, nor from Him who in justice has inflicted them. Merely meditating about God does not, therefore, constitute an evidence of godliness. If we do not *delight* in thinking of him and the things of his kingdom, it is because his love has not been shed abroad in our hearts. If we do not *love* to have Christ in our thoughts, we are none of his.

Here it may be asked, whether all *delightful* meditations on divine subjects, form conclusive evidence of a gracious state. To this it may be answered: if false converts can receive the word with joy, (which was the case with the stony ground hearers in the parable,) there is nothing to prevent their afterwards having joyful meditations on divine subjects. Delightful musings about God, afford no evidence of true piety, unless his *holy character* is the grand thing which renders them delightful. When the Psalmist said, "My meditation of him shall be sweet, I will be glad in the Lord," we are to consider him as having his contemplations fixed on the character of Jehovah. And when the righteous man is said to delight in the law of the Lord, and to meditate in it day and night, we are to understand the unabated law, the unadulterated word, to be that in which he delights and meditates. That meditation which is an evidence of true grace, is fed with truth, and with nothing else. The spiritual man beholds the glory of the Lord exhibited in the word of truth, and while he is employed in contemplating it, he perceives it to exert a transforming influence on his heart: he is changed into the same image. Such meditation is peculiar to the man of grace.

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

There certainly can be no discord between this and any other branch of experimental religion; nor between this and any doctrine which

is according to godliness. There are five of the Articles in the *experimental* system, with which the one now under consideration has a manifest agreement. The Articles referred to, are the *second, fifth, sixth, eighth, and eleventh*. If Christians, as was shown in the *second* Article, *delight in God and all holy beings*, and in every thing of a holy character, how perfectly natural it must be for them to *meditate* on these things. If, according to the *fifth*, they live by *faith on a Savior whom they have not seen*, is it strange that this unseen Savior should often occupy a place in their thoughts? If they *hope for a heavenly inheritance*, (as represented in Article *sixth*,) will they not, by holy meditation, oft times penetrate to “within the veil,” where their hope is anchored? What more natural, than that they who are journeying towards a country where they have possessions, and where they expect permanently to reside, should frequently muse about their distant home.—And how can they *hunger and thirst after righteousness*, (as the *eighth* Article shows they do,) without thinking much on heavenly things,—without ever and anon sending up devout ejaculations to the great Author of their being? A hungry man can not but think of food; nor can a thirsty man help thinking of drink. How, then, can one be spiritually hungry, and not have his thoughts dwell upon that “bread which cometh down from heaven?”—spiritually thirsty, and not think of that “well of water which springeth up into everlasting life?”—Again, Christians can not exercise true *thankfulness to God*, (the subject matter of the *eleventh* Article,) unless they meditate on him, his works, and his word. Such meditation is admirably adapted to excite gratitude; and this, in turn, is a good preparative to devout meditation.

There is entire harmony between the subject of this Article, and *doctrinal* truth. Destroy the latter, and there would be nothing to sustain the former. As well might a hungry man be nourished with juiceless husks, as a holy soul be satisfied with meditations which do not rest on the truth of God. But as bread is both pleasant and nourishing to men in health, so is divine truth, to such as have been recovered from the dominion of sin. Will not all such be pleased to meditate on those leading doctrines, which are comprehended in the First Part of this work?—What a theme for devout contemplation is *the existence and infinite attributes of Jehovah*. And how must the godly admire that display of boundless power, wisdom, and benevolence, which is made in the *works of creation and providence*. What a theme for holy meditation is *the law of God*,—a law which is the picture of His own heart,—a law which, were it kept by all the subjects of moral government, would produce the most entire harmony through the intelligent universe. It is as pure as God himself. On this part of the system of truth, the good man meditates with great delight. It is a matter of rejoicing to him, that this perfect law is to be the eternal rule to direct all his affections and conduct. But from this delightful contemplation, his mind is turned to a painful subject; a subject, however, which he does not choose to pass over, without devoting to it many a serious thought. He does not choose to forget *man's defection from God*, by the transgression of his holy law. He views himself as involved in this unreasonable rebellion. Meditation



on this subject, lays him in the dust before the Supreme King : it also prepares him to become more interested with the wonderful and glorious doctrine of *atonement, made for the sin of men*, by the death of the Son of God. On this theme, angels delight to contemplate. In the atonement, justice and mercy are blended. It evinces that God is determined fully to maintain his law, without the abatement of a single jot or tittle ; and yet that he exercises unbounded compassion towards transgressors.

From the contemplation of the vicarious sacrifice for sin, the Christian's mind is naturally led to go forth with the servants, who are commissioned to *bid as many as they find to the marriage*. What an interest does he take in the work which is committed to these servants. And this brings him to take a view of another dark shade in the picture ; not, however, the darkness of an erroneous doctrine :—no, there is no truth which he regards as more incontrovertible than that contained in the *seventh Article*, namely ; that *all men are, by nature, wholly averse to accepting the proposals of mercy*, tendered them in the gospel. But the very fact that this doctrine is true, and that he himself was once a living example of its truth, gives to his meditations a tone of penitence and humility. As, however, a view of man's apostasy prepared him to contemplate Christ's propitiatory sacrifice with deeper interest, so does the universal rejection of the gospel overtures, which he is now considering, pave the way for his meditating, with profound gratitude, upon that *renovation of heart* by the power of the Holy Ghost, whereby is secured the sinner's voluntary acceptance of those overtures.—And now he is led to contemplate that *free and rich grace*, which is displayed in the conversion of sinners. He ascribes their transformation to God's everlasting *purpose*, and to *grace* given them in Christ Jesus, before the world began.—The doctrine of *free justification* through the redemption of Christ, furnishes him another delightful theme for holy meditation. A hell-deserving creature is justified, without the deeds of the law, and yet the law is not repealed, nor even abated ; but is magnified and made honorable.—The *certain perseverance of the saints*, or the infallible connection between grace begun and perfected, is also a pleasing subject of meditation to him. It is pleasing, not only because it assures him that the gates of hell will never prevail against him, but also because it reflects so much honor on his Savior, as one who is able and faithful to save, unto the uttermost, all those who come unto God through him.—The *resurrection morning*, and the *day of judgment*, furnish him much matter for devout meditation. A consideration of this closing scene, gives a solemnity to the transactions of this mortal state : “For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”

When the pious mind has taken a view of the whole system of divine truth, from beginning to end, and has seen the harmony subsisting between its various parts, how forcibly is it impressed with the consistency and preciousness of the closing Article of our doctrinal series. What a theme for delightful meditation is this :—a divine PLAN, embracing every thing belonging to the creation, without excepting the smallest insect, or the minutest particle ; and every event

in providence, even to the falling of a sparrow, or of a hair from our head : and this plan going into complete operation, by *the all-controlling energy* of Him in whose infinite mind the plan was originated ! And how pleasing the thought, that the whole is so contrived and executed, that all things in creation and providence combine together to make the best display of the Creator's glory ; and at the same time, to give a permanent existence to a most holy and blessed society of intelligent creatures.

REMARKS.

1. One important difference between saints and sinners, consists in their *thoughts*. The two classes are alike in this, that they both have thoughts, yea, an uninterrupted succession of them ; but with regard to the character of those thoughts, and the subjects on which they are employed, there is a striking dissimilarity. The scripture testifies that "the thoughts of the righteous are right ;" and that "the thoughts of the wicked are abomination to the Lord." They have laid up their treasures in different worlds ; and where their treasures are, there will their hearts and meditations be also. Though our thoughts may be hidden from human observation, they are all visible to God ; nor does he look upon them with indifference, any more than upon our words and actions. It is said, "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise," (that is, of the worldly wise,) "that they are vanity." He sees very many of his creatures on earth, who either wholly exclude him from their thoughts, or who think contemptuously of him and the interests of his kingdom. But he sees another class, who contemplate these subjects with great frequency and delight. At the great day of account, all the thoughts which occupied men's minds while here below, will be disclosed ; and then it will be seen, that one particular in which renewed men had differed widely from the unrenewed, was in the nature and subjects of their meditations.

2. With this Article before us, we can see why Christians are not rendered as unhappy by their privations as other men. Their spiritual meditations are sweet. While the votary of pleasure is rendered gloomy by being left alone, the child of God often covets solitude. Many a Christian has felt what one has thus expressed ; that *he was never less alone, than when alone*. The Christian's best Friend is always near him ; and to think of that Friend, is a source of much of his enjoyment. In journeying, he often prefers to travel alone, because it gives him a more favorable opportunity for devotional thought. He can be cheerful when surrounded by the darkness of night ; for it does not hide from him that infinite Being, to whom the darkness and the light are both alike. If his sleep departs from him, he remembers God upon his bed, and meditates on him in the night watches. Ps. lxiii. 6. If the sense of hearing become so blunted, that he can no longer be fed with the provisions of God's house, or be cheered by the conversation of his friends, still he can refresh his mind by ruminating on what he has already heard. Is he deprived of sight, and can he no more behold the face of man, nor the beauties of creation ? The

deprivation does not render him melancholy ; for to the unclosed eye of faith, a fairer world is yet visible. Indeed, the loss of the external sense, may have been made the means of augmenting the clearness of his spiritual vision.—Many years ago, I became acquainted with a pious woman, who, in the latter part of her life, had become blind. She told me (and apparently with great sincerity) that she would not desire the restoration of her sight, even if it could be restored. I derived the impression, that after becoming blind, her faith had been increased, her meditations rendered more spiritual, and her communion with God more intimate and uninterrupted ; and that she was afraid, should her sight be restored, it might have the effect to divert her attention, and lessen her spiritual enjoyment.

3. With the subject of holy meditation before us, we can discover one reason why they who are spiritually minded, never close a day without feeling that they have fresh cause for repentance. Should a day pass, without their committing any external act of sin, still they would feel that they had cause for humiliation before God, on account of their vain thoughts. Such men view themselves under obligation to give God their hearts, and with all diligence to keep them for him ; and they feel no small degree of guilt, because they do it so imperfectly. They chide themselves because their thoughts are with him no more by day, no more by night. And those who most eagerly strive to cherish holy meditations in their minds, are the ones who feel the most guilt on account of vain thoughts. Much of the sin of which a Christian is convicted, in reviewing one of his Sabbaths, consists in the wanderings of his mind from those holy subjects, which he considers ought exclusively to occupy his thoughts, during that sacred day. And the want of holy meditations on other days, does, in his view, form no inconsiderable item in the list of his moral delinquencies : and is of itself enough to convince him, that he has not yet attained to perfection. That man, who feels it no part of his duty to give a pious direction to his thoughts, may fancy himself a faultless character ; when the Christian is groaning, “O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?”

Time would fail me, were I to particularize every thing belonging to the experiences of the Christian, and to describe all the shades of difference between the various affections which the Spirit of God has wrought in his heart. It was not so much the design of this work, to bring into view all that could be said on each branch of divine truth, as to point out the harmony which subsists between the several branches, as proceeding from one common root. A sufficient number of particulars under the head of experimental religion, have already been presented to enable us to perceive, that entire harmony exists between the various affections which the Holy Spirit generates in the heart of the believer ; also, that there is a necessary connection between these affections, and the holy doctrines of the Bible.

Those particulars belonging to internal religion, to which I have not assigned a place as distinct articles, will be seen, if closely examined, to have a great affinity to such as have been considered. For example, *godly fear* is nothing but love, afraid to offend the greatest



and most amiable of all beings. *Patience* is nearly allied to submission. It seems to be a submission which is protracted, and that under a continuation of afflictive and trying events. *Meekness*, that excellent grace which shone so conspicuously in our blessed Lord, differs but little from humbleness of mind; in connection with which it is often introduced. A benevolent and humble spirit will be meek; that is, it will not be easily provoked; and when provoked, it will be easily pacified. A *tender*, in distinction from a hard heart, or what is usually termed a *tender conscience*, forms an important ingredient in the experience of every true Christian: but a tender conscience differs very little from a penitential frame of heart. A heart which is truly contrite for sin, will be afraid to repeat those offenses which have caused it so much grief.

*Spiritual discernment* is another ingredient in the Christian's experience. The things of the Spirit of God are spiritually discerned. 1 Cor. ii. 14. He who is divinely illuminated, beholds the beauty and glory of the Lord, in such a manner as other men cannot behold it. The understanding is employed in the discovery, but if the heart were not sanctified, the glory of holiness could not be discerned. This spiritual discernment, as we have already seen, is not very distinguishable from that complacency in holy characters, and in other exhibitions of holiness, which forms the subject of the second Article in the experimental system. A mind qualified to discern the beauty of holy objects, and a mind prepared to exercise complacency in them, is much the same. Perhaps the former is to be considered as preparatory to the latter: yet both must be the fruit of benevolence.

*Holy joy* belongs to genuine Christian experience. "The fruit of the Spirit is love and joy." "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." This joy in the Holy Ghost, results from the grace which he begets and cherishes in the hearts of believers, and is greatly increased by the vigorous exercise of those graces.

*Self-examination*, or the keeping up an intimate acquaintance with our own hearts, and detecting their secret springs of action, is one of the appendages of internal religion. It implies a desire thoroughly to know ourselves, and to form the same estimate of our every thought, word, and action, which He forms, who will one day sit in judgment upon them. Between this Christian trait, however, and holy meditation, the distinction is scarcely perceptible. Some remarks on the vital importance of self-examination, will be reserved for the retrospect of Part II., upon which I shall now enter.

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## A RETROSPECT OF PART II.

THOUGH this Part of our work was prefaced with some general remarks on the nature and importance of experimental religion, still I

know not how to leave so interesting a subject, till I have placed before the reader a few other remarks that have been suggested to my mind, and which I could not easily embody in any of the foregoing Articles. In making these remarks, it may be difficult to avoid all repetitions: but should I, in some instances, "write the same things to you," permit me to adopt Paul's apology, and say, "for you it is safe." Phil. iii. 1.

I. Let it be distinctly remembered, that *all religious experiences are not of a holy nature*. There are false experiences, as well as those which are true. In relation to internal religion, more than almost anything else, there is great danger that a man will think himself to be something, when he is nothing. Gal. vi. 3. "There is a *generation* that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness." Prov. xxx. 12. By the passage last cited we are to understand, that men of this character have their successors from age to age. There are many, whose seemingly warm love to Christ is proved to be spurious, by its waxing cold, in distinction from its enduring to the end. Matt. xxiv. 12, 13.

The Christian world is certainly full of unscriptural doctrines, unless we suppose the scriptures themselves to contain contradictory schemes. And have we not reason to believe, that *false experiences* are as common as false doctrines? In the experimental, or inward part of religion, Satan must have peculiar advantages for deceiving us; since it has its seat within a man's own breast, and comes not within the observation of his fellow men. A man who is thus deceived, may say to his anxious friends, Think you I am unacquainted with the true state of my own feelings? "For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful." Ps. xxxvi. 2.

II. That a man's religious experiences correspond with those of some other man, furnishes no positive evidence that they are genuine. Two time-pieces might agree, even to a minute, and yet both be wrong. The very fact, however, of their agreeing so exactly, would probably mislead the owners, and make them suppose they had the true time. In like manner, the experiences of two individuals may be alike, and yet neither of them be genuine. Such resemblance in religious experiences often exists; and the practice of making it a test of their soundness, has been the means of deceiving very many. I verily believe, that through the subtlety of the tempter, there have been great religious excitements, where the method which the converts used to test the genuineness of their religion, was to compare themselves among themselves; which practice, the apostle assures us is not wise. It is unwise for any man to make his neighbor's feelings a standard, by which to determine the character of his own. It is the part of wisdom first to ascertain, that what you make your standard, is itself indisputably right. Such a standard of *experimental*, as well as of doctrinal religion, we have in the word of God. The experiences of Abraham, of David, and of Paul, were the experiences of men who were born of God. All those religious affections, by whomsoever experienced, which the scriptures exhibit with approbation, may safely be made the touch-stone by which to try our own. But before I can determine my own exercises to be right, from the circumstance that

they accord with those of my neighbor, I must first try the character of his, by that infallible standard—the word of truth. If you are presented with a memoir of a person celebrated for his piety, it is dangerous to use it as a test by which to determine the genuineness of your own, until you clearly see that the religion it exhibits is in accordance with the word of God. Thus, for example, you are not authorized to draw any conclusion in favor of your own experiences, because they harmonize with those of Brainerd and Martyn, any further than you have become satisfied that theirs are in harmony with the Bible.

III. In connection with this department of divine truth, it highly concerns us to ascertain what is intended by the *witness of the Spirit*. “*The Spirit itself*,” says the apostle, “*beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*” Rom. viii. 16. In what manner, it may be asked, does the Spirit bear witness? The Spirit is said to bear witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, when he begets in us those holy dispositions and tempers, which constitute us his children; and when he helps our spirit to discern their existence, and their conformity to the divine image. In the holy scriptures, the Spirit of God has borne witness to the truth. There we have his testimony concerning Christian experience, or inward religion. It is by his powerful influence that such religion is wrought within us; and when he has given it an existence in our hearts, he can enable us to discern its agreement with the testimony he has given concerning it, in the written word.

It may perhaps be said, This is rather the *fruit*, than the *witness* of the Spirit—a preparation for the testimony, rather than the testimony itself. This difficulty is easily obviated; for in the same chapter where this witness is spoken of, the Spirit is said to make *intercession* for the saints, with groanings which can not be uttered. These unutterable groans, it is manifest, exist no where except in the hearts of the saints; and yet they are called the intercessions and the mind of *the Spirit*, because they are the product of his gracious influence. In the same sense in which the Spirit of God is said to make intercession for us, with those unutterable groanings which he produces in us, he is said to bear witness, by those holy affections in our hearts of which he is the author. As soon as these holy affections exist, even before they are manifested by external actions, our own spirit is capable of discovering them, and thence deriving evidence of our adoption into the family of God.

It is well calculated to confirm us in the opinion, that, by *the witness of the Spirit*, is meant nothing more than those holy affections which he produces in our hearts; that these, together with the holy actions in which they naturally result, are always resorted to in the scriptures for the evidence of our being the children of God. They are not only adduced as furnishing some of the evidence of our adoption, but as furnishing the whole of it. If this be correct, is it not very unreasonable to suppose, that the text in question has reference to evidence of a different nature? Any different view of the witness of the Spirit, must be of a dangerous tendency. It would be leaving this interesting question, *Am I a child of God?* to be determined by other and different evidence, than that which arises from possessing the temper, or per-



forming the duties, of an obedient child. Does not a dependence on some more *immediate* witness of the Spirit, than what consists in those holy dispositions which are the result of his sanctifying influences, expose us to believe every spirit; even such as go about to deceive that they may destroy? If we adopt the sentiment, that the Holy Ghost bears witness of our acceptance, in some way which leaves no impress of the divine image on our heart, how can we distinguish between His testimony, and that of a lying spirit; a spirit who would rejoice to persuade us, by some secret whisper or impression, that we are the children of God, and not of the devil?

IV. Since experimental religion, when genuine, is *truth* in the inward parts, it must naturally lead the mind to adopt *true doctrines*, instead of such as are erroneous. A rectified palate has a relish for wholesome food; and a sanctified heart relishes the sincere milk of the word. 1 Pet. ii. 2. That holy anointing which transforms a sinner into a saint, and preserves in him the renovated character, “is *truth*, and is no lie.” 1 John, ii. 27. The entrance of divine truth into the heart, when it has been effected by this anointing, has often proved the means of bringing men to believe what they had before called hard, and even horrible doctrines. In them is verified that prediction; “They also that erred in spirit, shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.” Isa. xxix. 24. There is a divine glory in revealed truth, and the experimental believer discovers it. In him it is not a mere rational conviction, in which his heart takes no interest: it is a benevolent mind discovering an ineffable display of God’s goodness in his precious word. The more completely selfish affections are expelled his bosom, the more are his eyes opened to behold those glorious mysteries, which are brought to light by the volume of inspiration.

This spiritual discernment of the holy nature and sweet harmony of divine truth, is that which, above all other things, produces a full and settled belief of the inspiration of the scriptures, and of the divine origin and excellency of that religion which they inculcate. When we are warned against being carried about with divers and strange doctrines, we are told what is the best preventive for this evil: “For it is a good thing that the heart be established with *grace*.” This was the thing which established the heart of Peter, when he said to Jesus, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” That it was the thing, is evident from Christ’s saying to him, “Blessed art thou, Simon, Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” When it is said, “He that believeth on the Son, hath the witness in himself,” it supposes that the religion of the gospel holds dominion in the heart of the believer; and that it prepares him to be fully satisfied concerning its truth, so as effectually to prevent him from becoming an infidel. *Grace* in the heart, is not only a preventive against apostacy from the Christian faith; but its tendency is to preserve us from all departures from sound doctrine. By what the apostle John says concerning those heretics which went out from them, it is manifest he imputes their departure from sound doctrine, to their destitution of that unction from the Holy One, by which we know all things. 1 John, ii. 18—20.

That steadfastness in the Christian religion, and in its peculiar doctrines, which is the result of an experimental knowledge, is quite a different thing from that unyielding adherence to the religion of ancestors, which is seen among pagans, Mahometans, Jews, papists, and (not unfrequently) different sects of protestants. The steadfastness of which we speak, is not the effect of ignorance, or of blind and servile imitation; but is the fruit of knowledge, even that which has been gained by our own happy experience. If our fathers before us have believed the gospel, and our teachers have instructed us into the divine mission of the Redeemer, still we can say with truth, "Now we believe, not because of your sayings; for we have seen him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world." The Spirit so takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us, that we seem to have a sight of his glory. While unstable minds are ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth, they whose hearts are under the teaching of the Spirit, are ever growing in the knowledge of the truth, and becoming more and more established therein.

V. The importance of experimental religion renders *self-examination* indispensably requisite. If our religion want the experimental part, we shall have no meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light; and if our experience be radically deficient, it will profit us nothing. This part of religion, as distinguished from *doctrine* and *practice*, is confined to the heart, and can therefore be directly seen and examined by none save God and ourselves. "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man that is in him?" 1 Cor. ii. 11. By this the apostle meant, not that every man forms a correct opinion of himself, but that, through the medium of self-examination, he is capable of doing so. No doubt there are innumerable cases, where others decide more correctly concerning a man's character, especially in relation to the subject of religion, than he himself does. His sins go beforehand to judgment, and his neighbors can perceive that he is in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, while he is flattering himself that he enjoys the liberty wherewith Christ makes free. His religious opinions may be so erroneous, or his experiences so hollow-hearted, or his practices so vicious, as to make it manifest to all that he is an unchanged man. Admitting, however, that in all these particulars he seems blameless, still his fellow men can not know that he has passed from death unto life; for they can not discern the state of his heart. A man has power to ascertain his own sincerity, or his own hypocrisy, so as his neighbors have not. Peter could say concerning himself, *Lord thou knowest that I love thee*; while concerning Silvanus, an eminent minister whose piety he had probably never questioned, he could only say, "a faithful brother, as *I suppose*." 1 Pet. v. 12.

In self-examination, we have a right, and it is our duty, to avail ourselves of all the helps within our reach; but *we ourselves* must use them, or they will do us no good. To aid us in the difficult task, we have the word of God, and a preached gospel, and valuable books designed expressly for the purpose. In addition to all other helps, we have liberty to invoke His aid, who has an intuitive knowledge of our

hearts; and this privilege is very great. Convinced as we are that our hearts lie concealed from the view of all men, and well nigh disheartened in our attempts to ascertain our true character, it must afford us great relief to be permitted to say, in the language of David, "Search me, O God, and know my heart." They who apply themselves to this duty aright, make their ultimate dependence on the omniscience and mercy of God, to guide them in the examination of their own hearts, and to prevent their being ruined by self-deception.

VI. In view of the clear exhibitions which the word of God has made, of the substantial and pure nature of this department of religion, it is truly affecting to see what *unsubstantial things are relied on as Christian experiences*. Affections, caused by imaginary discoveries, and which have the appearance of mere animal sensations, are considered by many as those holy affections which are peculiar to the regenerate. One has perceived a sweet smell, which he could not account for by the presence of any odorous substance; unless it should be that mystical "spikenard that sendeth forth the smell thereof." This odor has been supposed to be a fruit and evidence of the new birth. Another has had a light or some other imaginary object, suddenly burst upon his view; and this he has narrated for a Christian experience. Another's conversion consists in hearing angelic music, or some particular words addressed to him. A pleasant sensation in the breast, or in some other part of the animal system, has relieved the anxieties of many, and made them imagine they had received the joys of the Holy Ghost. Some have been relieved by a remarkable dream; and some, by the presentation of a promise to their eye, on their first opening the Bible. Others, without opening the Bible, have had a promise, and perhaps a multitude of them, made suddenly to pass through their minds; and from this circumstance, have inferred that those promises were applicable to them.

If such things as these be the experimental religion of the Bible, let them be trusted in; but if they are the imaginations of our own hearts, and the delusions of the adversary, let them no more be dignified with the name of Christian experiences. Dreams, visions, and voices, never constituted the religion of the heart; nor can they be any evidence of its existence. The dreams of Pharaoh were from God, but were no proof that he was a child of God. Balaam had visions of the Almighty; but he was no saint. In the thirteenth chapter of Paul's 1st epistle to the Corinthians, we are taught to make a perfect distinction between all miraculous gifts, and that charity, or love, which constitutes the essence of true religion. And we are cautioned against considering these gifts any proof of the existence of holy love.

If visionary appearances are viewed as an evidence of a change of heart, it is because they are supposed to be a *direct revelation* from God to prove the fact; for surely it can not be on account of anything morally excellent in their nature. Holiness of heart is not necessarily implied in having a *vision* of Christ, any more than in seeing the *person* of Christ; and this last was seen by thousands of those who lived and died his enemies. The children of Israel all heard the voice of God, when he spake to them out of the burning



mount ; but it did not transform their hearts. Why then should we make dependence on any voice which may now be heard, even though it should seem to break from the clouds ? And is there any more holiness in dreaming of *heaven*, than in dreaming of *hell* ? A mind, entirely destitute of the grace of God, may retain in memory many or all of the promises of scripture. And may not such promises be suddenly thrown into the mind, without producing any transforming effect ?

These things are not that kind of evidence of moral renovation, which is afforded by repentance, faith, a spirit of forgiveness, and other holy affections : it is that kind, rather, which Daniel had, when the angel Gabriel was sent from heaven to inform him that his prayer was accepted. These visionary appearances are considered as a direct revelation ; and because they are so considered, they give peace and joy to those who were before distressed. But what right have we to believe that God does, in such a direct way, assure us that we are pardoned and justified ? Where, in all his word, has he promised that he will make a special revelation to such as pass from death to life, to give them assurance of the fact ? Some may think there is no way to account for such manifestations, except by ascribing them to the agency of the Holy Spirit. But is it forgotten, that there is a spirit of a very different character, who walketh about seeking whom he may devour ? and that his most successful way of destroying the souls of men, is by employing subtle wiles—by transforming himself into an angel of light ? Surely, we can not have forgotten, that he made use of a precious promise of the scriptures, when he tempted the Son of God to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. From this we learn, that the promises of God's word are familiar to that deceiver, and that a misapplication of them is one of his most subtle wiles. And all those visionary appearances which have been mentioned, are things which come within his power. They do not require the power of the Almighty to produce them ; nor do they leave the divine image impressed on the heart. Men who are entirely under the dominion of self-love, may be greatly pleased with such experiences ; and may feel strong emotions of selfish gratitude to God, for what they consider to be tokens of his special regard to them. But is it not perfectly evident, that such things as these constitute no part of the experimental religion of the gospel ? The experiences sanctioned by the word of God, are as different from them, as wheat is from chaff ; and are as much superior to them, as holiness is to sin.

I am aware that some readers may think, that cautions against making dependence on things so foolish and unscriptural, can hardly be necessary : but had they known as many instances of dependence being made on such things, as the writer has, they would think very differently.\*

I am far from believing that *visionary* experiences are the only kind

\* On such visionary appearances, the author of this work once made dependence, and was, as he has ever since fully believed, actually taken in one of these snares of the devil. And if there be any particular class of sinners towards whom he feels a peculiar compassion, and under obligation to make efforts for their rescue, it is such as are taken in these ruinous snares. He longs to have such deceived ones see and feel, that they are feeding on ashes and husks, instead of the bread of life.

which are unsound. There have doubtless been many false converts, whose experience consisted in apparent submission to God. All experiences are spurious, where the selfish principle has not been changed. False religion, however specious, is still an empty vine, inasmuch as it always brings forth fruit unto itself. The love of the false convert, in whatever way he obtains his hope, has nothing in it of a disinterested nature. His love to God (if love it may be called) is elicited, not by the holy character he possesses, but by the blessings he has bestowed, or is expected to bestow, on him. If he repents of sin, it is not on account of its evil nature or contrariety to God, but its contrariety to his own interest. If he admires the Savior, it is not because he abhorred sin, and died to rescue men from its direful bondage; but because he is viewed as rescuing them from its awful punishment. If he loves the brethren, it is not because they are "holy brethren" and love Christ; but because they love *him*, and belong to the same church or denomination with himself. His religious comforts are not joy in the Holy Ghost; but in his own supposed goodness and safety. Should such a one hold out in his religion to the end of life, it will not be because he delights in the service of God; it will be because he deems it a necessary means of preserving his reputation in this world, or of securing his happiness in the world to come.

VII. It is worthy of particular remark, that the *inward experience* of the power of religion, is the *cause of all that pure and elevated enjoyment*, which the scriptures attribute to the godly. They delight themselves in the Lord, and their spirit rejoices in God their Savior. They affirm that he has put gladness in their heart, more than what is enjoyed by the lovers of wealth, even when their corn and wine are increased. Ps. xxxvii. 4. Luke i. 47. The apostles and primitive Christians, though sorrowful, were *always rejoicing*. 2 Cor. vi. 10. Surely, it must have been from their religion that they derived their happiness; but the religion of the gospel does not become the source of happiness, until it is experimentally known. They whose knowledge of gospel doctrines is that of mere scholars, and whose obedience to gospel precepts is that of heartless formalists, do not know what is meant by that joy which is the fruit of the Spirit. We must experimentally "taste," to "see that the Lord is good." Ps. xxxiv. 8. Until we do this, we can not know that Christ is the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely: nor can we sit down under his shadow with great delight, and have his fruit sweet to our taste. Until we hunger and thirst for righteousness, we are not prepared to be feasted with those discoveries of righteousness, which are made in the word of truth. But when the Holy Spirit has given us appetite, if we find God's word, we eat it, and it is the joy and rejoicing of our heart. Jer. xv. 16.

While destitute of an experimental acquaintance with the gospel, we may be puffed up, and think we are rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; we may flatter ourselves that we have made great attainments in divine knowledge, and that we have kept all the commandments from our youth up; but unless we are renewed in our mind, and made partakers of the divine nature, we are never made

happy by beholding displays of the divine character, whether in the law or the gospel. And as the holy enjoyment of Christians commences with their experimental knowledge of the truth, so, by the continuance and increase of such experience, their religious enjoyment is continued and increased. It can not be perpetuated by the mere soundness of their creed, or the regularity of their lives. It is only by their being sanctified through the truth, that they enjoy their religion. When the work of sanctification is retrograde, their comforts decay; and it is only when this work becomes again progressive, that their comforts are restored. In accordance with this sentiment, we hear the church, in a time of declension, making this prayer: "Wilt thou not revive us again, that we may *rejoice in thee*?" There are times when the work of the Spirit is so powerful in the hearts of the children of God, that they are filled with joy, even "joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

Here is a motive for the cultivation of experimental religion, which we should suppose would reach the heart of every Christian;—its cultivation is absolutely essential to his happiness as a Christian. The more he has of it, the more is he prepared to enjoy God, and to drink at the fountain of living waters;—to have intimate fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Were the Christian to keep his heart with all diligence, so as to keep himself in the love of God, his joy in God, which is pure in its nature, would be like a continual feast; and such pure and uninterrupted enjoyment, would be a foretaste and earnest of his future blessedness in heaven.

But let us not imagine that all *religious joy* is a certain evidence of regeneration. False experiences produce selfish joys: "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with *joy* receiveth it." Matt. xiii. 20. Here was joy, not secular, but religious; and yet the religion which produced it, had no root, and therefore endured but for a while. There were some of the hearers of John, the forerunner of Christ, who were willing for a season to *rejoice* in his light; who nevertheless rejected Him who was the light of the world. There is a sense in which men may "taste the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come," and yet fall away, and thus prove their religion to be without foundation. That joy which is the fruit of the Spirit, not only relates to holy things, but is a *holy joy*, or a delight in such things. The holiness which is seen in God and divine things, is the ground of it; and sanctification in our hearts, is essentially requisite to a *delightful* contemplation of the beauty of holiness. The *Christian's* enjoyment in religion could not be preserved by having a holy angel sent from heaven every day, to assure him of the certainty of his future blessedness; unless the Holy Spirit were also sent every day, to give him a foretaste of that blessedness. The mission of the angel might be enough to keep up the enjoyment of one whose religion is bottomed on selfishness; but it would be far from satisfying the true convert. Selfish joys promote pride; but holy joys are of a humble character.

VIII. It is important to be understood, that *instruction on the subject of experimental religion, can be given to the unregenerate*. While they continue in unregeneracy, they must of necessity remain desti-



tute of that knowledge which is gained by experience. An apostle has said, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." He has no proper discovery of the beauty of holiness, in any of its manifestations. All attempts to give him the same inward perception of this beauty, which the Holy Ghost has imparted to the true believer, will prove wholly unavailing. But is it a legitimate inference, that he can receive no instruction on this subject? May he not receive *doctrinal* light concerning Christian experiences, as well as concerning doctrines themselves?

In the first place, the natural man is capable of seeing, that *inward feeling* is as necessary a part of the gospel religion, as belief and practice. In the next place, he can be made to see, that the feelings of the heart, in order to be right, must be in harmony with the truth; and that no affection, except that which is of a disinterested nature, can be in harmony with it. Though he has not known, by his own experience, what such a generous affection is, he can easily see that it must be the contrast of that selfishness, of which every human heart has large experience. He is also capable of perceiving, that it must be right to extend our benevolent regard to all, good and bad, while we restrict our complacency to the good. He can be instructed into the nature and reasonableness of reconciliation to God. He can be so instructed concerning the nature and obligation of repentance, as to feel himself inexcusable that he does not exercise it. He can be made theoretically acquainted with faith, as well as with the atonement, which is its object. In fine, he may receive definite ideas in relation to all the parts of Christian experience, as well as in relation to the articles of Christian doctrine.

Great evils will manifestly result from saying to the unregenerate, Experimental religion is a subject so far above your reach, that you are incapable of forming any correct sentiments concerning it. Two of these evils I will now point out.

First. Such representations are calculated to make men feel innocent, for being destitute of inward religion,—as innocent, as for being destitute of the knowledge of the philosopher's stone. But let us tell them what such religion is, and that they can acquire all the knowledge of it that the Christian possesses, save that which is obtained by the exercise of it. Then let us proceed to tell them that they are under present and pressing obligation to exercise those feelings of heart, which are in accordance with what they know to be eternal truth: and they can be made to feel guilty before God. The unconverted can be made to feel as guilty for not *loving* the truth, as for not *believing* it; for not loving God, his law, and the grace displayed in the sacrifice of his Son, as for becoming infidels, with all the light of a divine revelation shining around them.

Secondly. If you tell men, that, while destitute of experimental religion, they can know nothing about it, nor be profited by hearing any instructions on the subject, do you not, by this means, put them in the power of the enemy, and prepare the way for their being grossly deceived? The sinner has heard there is such a thing as regeneration, and that he must experience it, or never see the kingdom of God; but

he has also heard, that the change is of such a nature as to be altogether inexplicable to him, until he has himself experienced it. In such a state of things, is he not in the utmost danger of being deceived by Satan, who is able to transform himself into an angel of light? If he should have an extraordinary dream, especially if it be of a religious character, he will be in danger of saying within himself, Is not this that great change, which I have been told I must experience, to prepare me for heaven; and which I have also been told I could form no conception of, until I had actually experienced it? Surely, he may say, I now feel very differently on the subject of religion from what I ever felt before. Or if, instead of a dream, he should have a waking *vision*, he might be led to the same conclusion. Or should he have a pleasant sensation, not felt before, in the literal heart; or a sudden impression made upon the sensorium, either with or without a comforting text of scripture simultaneously occurring to mind, what would prevent him from drawing the conclusion, that the thing he had experienced was the new birth? If you once adopt the sentiment, that the unconverted can, in no sense, be enlightened on this subject, you prepare the way for the deceiver to come, in any form he pleases, and induce them to think they are something, when they are nothing.

Now it is certain that very much may be done to counteract the deceiver, and to prevent his drawing into this ruinous snare, such a multitude of souls. Let us tell sinners, (for it is a truth,) that they are capable of receiving instruction on the subject of religious experiences, as well as on other points in divinity; and let us proceed to give them the instruction which they need. Let us show them what and how great the difference is between true and false experiences,—between such as are the fruit of the Spirit of God, and such as are the work of the deceiver. I know they are liable to be deceived, when we have done our best; but there is reason to hope that our labor will not be utterly in vain. If an unconverted man could form no correct opinions concerning the evidences of conversion, he would not, on experiencing that change, be in a condition to test its genuineness. It is granted, that we can not make him so know the feelings of a convert, as he will know them, should they ever become his own. But we can furnish him with those discriminating marks between disinterested and selfish religion, which may help him, with some accuracy to distinguish between true and false experiences, when he hears them related by others. These discriminating marks will enable him, not only to determine the unregeneracy of his present state, but to discern the genuineness of his conversion, should he, through grace, ever become experimentally acquainted with that desirable change.





THE HARMONY  
OF  
DIVINE TRUTH.

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PART III.

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TRUTH IN PRACTICE.

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WE have seen what truth is in *doctrine*, and what it is in *experience*. It now remains to be shown what it is in *practice*. By practice, I mean *visible obedience*. Experience, as the word has been used in this work, is the inward obedience of the heart, or conformity of heart to the truth. By practical religion, I mean all that goodness of character which appears *outwardly*; consisting in words and actions. It is holiness of heart, rendered visible by the members of the body: or, as the apostle expresses it, by *yielding our members servants to righteousness unto holiness*. Rom. vi. 19.

The scriptures frequently recognize the distinction between experimental and practical religion; or between internal and external purity. When, in the 24th Psalm, the demand is made, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place?" the answer given is this: "He that hath *clean hands*, and a *pure heart*." "Clean hands" are here designed to express all that part of religion, which is comprised in external conformity to the law; and "a pure heart," all that which has its seat within. This distinction was made by our divine Teacher, when he said, "Cleanse that which is *within* the cup and platter, that the *outside* of them may be clean also." The scriptures distinguish between a *good tree*, and its *good fruit*; between *repentance*, and the *fruits* worthy of repentance; between *believing* in God, which is the religion of the heart, and a carefulness to maintain *good works*, which is the religion of the life; between *loving* God, and *keeping his commandments*.

The Bible sometimes makes a distinction between *good works*, and *good words*. The apostle says to the Thessalonians; "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, stablish you in every

good *word* and *work* :” and to the Colossians ; “ Whatsoever ye do in *word* or *deed*, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.” But though in these, and other passages, a distinction is made between words and works, yet *works* is a term so general in its signification, as to include *words*, together with all other external manifestations of the feelings of our hearts. All exhibitions of inward purity, whether consisting in words or actions, will here be comprehended under the head of *good works*, or practical religion.

There is a certain course of external conduct, which purity of heart will naturally prompt us to pursue. This course is what is termed by Isaiah, “ the way of holiness.” All other courses are considered as devious paths and crooked ways, leading to destruction. When Paul said to the Philippians, “ Let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ,” he meant to be understood as enjoining a course of regular and consistent conduct, comprehending actions as well as words ; for in the scriptures, *conversation* always means conduct—what one does, as well as what he says. They whose behavior is in accordance with the precepts of the gospel, are, in scripture, said to *do the truth*, and to *walk in the truth*. The way of holiness is distinguished from all devious paths, by its agreement with the truth, as exhibited in the commandments of God. David declares his resolution to live a holy life, by saying, “ I will run in the way of thy commandments.” Christ required his disciples to manifest the purity of their *hearts*, by the purity of their *lives* ; to demonstrate their inward attachment to him, by conforming their actions to his precepts. “ If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

The most convincing proof of an obedient heart, is an obedient life ; as appears by such passages as these : “ Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.” “ I will show thee my faith by my works.” “ In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil : whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God.” Ps. cxix. 6. Jam. ii. 18. 1 John, iii. 10. The text last quoted establishes the point, that the grand mark of distinction between saints and sinners, is the difference in their practice—their external behavior. It is certain that no external conduct whatever will please God, unless the heart be right ; but the scriptures lead us to conclude, that the more exactly and uniformly our external conduct is conformed to the rules prescribed in the word of God, the more reason there is to believe that the heart is right. It is acknowledged there is such a thing as hypocritical obedience ; but it is commonly maimed and deficient in its parts. Some duties are performed, and that perhaps with uncommon punctiliousness ; while other, and not unfrequently far weightier ones, are wholly omitted. It is not common for hypocrisy to have respect to *all* the commands, even in their *external* forms.

As Christian doctrine, or the truth we believe, lays the foundation for our inward experiences ; so our experiences lay a foundation for all our holy practice. The agreement between a sanctified heart and a holy life, is very intimate. When the tree is made good, you may be sure of good fruit ; and when the fountain is made sweet, the streams flowing from it will be sweet also. So if, through grace, we have

become possessed of a benevolent heart, our life will be benevolent likewise; that is, our conduct will be adapted to the promotion of the public good. If we have godliness within, we shall have godliness without: if the law of our God is in our heart, it will most certainly be the rule of our life. Though a wicked man may put on the mask of goodness, a good man can not put on the mask of wickedness. If, then, a life which is externally good, be not full proof that the heart is good, a bad life is incontrovertible proof that the heart is bad.

“Good works,” as this phrase is used in the scriptures, mean something more than right external actions; they mean such right actions as are the fruit of right affections of heart. “The term *good works*,” says Dr. Scott, “is never used in the New Testament, for ritual obedience, or moral virtue, as practiced by unbelievers; or for any other works than the fruits of the Spirit.” It is undoubtedly true, that, in the sight of God, those alone are accounted good works, which proceed from a good heart. He views the motive and the action together; for they belong together. But as the motive which prompts the action, lies concealed from us, we are often under the necessity of calling those works good, which God will condemn as evil, in the day when he will manifest the secrets of the heart. While, therefore, it is proper for the omniscient God to apply the term *good works*, exclusively to those actions which result from holy affections; it is not improper for us to use this distinctive term, in application to such actions as holy affections will naturally produce, whether they are all of them the real fruit of such affections, or not.

Holy practice naturally divides itself into two distinct branches, namely; the duties we owe directly to God; and those which we owe more immediately to men. This distinction is noticeable in the ten commandments; the first four of which, relate to the duties we owe to God himself; and the other six, to the duties we owe to our fellow men. This distinction between duties to God, and duties to men, was no doubt one reason why the commandments were written on *two* tables. The same difference was evidently made by Christ, when he reduced all the precepts of the law into two; the first requiring love to God, and the second, love to men. Being asked, which was the great commandment in the law, he said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment: and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” As the whole of a good life, or a correct practice, is comprised in duty to God and man; so we find the whole character of one who was destitute of goodness, is expressed by saying, “he feared not God, neither regarded man.” Luke xviii. 2.

Let it be understood, that it is God to whom we are under obligation to discharge the whole of our duty, whether enjoined in the first or second table of the law, whether He or our neighbor, be the immediate object of it; for every duty is enjoined by his supreme authority. It is God who commands us to do good to our neighbor, and God who bids us render homage to himself. The duty enjoined in the former command, we owe indirectly and ultimately to God, though directly to our neighbor; while that required by the latter is due to God, as both



its ultimate and its immediate object. This difference between the two classes of duties, may be illustrated by the case of parents, who prescribe rules to regulate the conduct of their children towards themselves, and also towards one another. We say of some of these rules, that they relate to *filial* duties, or duties which the children, as such, owe immediately to their parents; and of others, that they relate to those *fraternal* duties which, as brothers, they owe to equals in the family. And those children ought to feel, that, in performing the *fraternal*, as well as the filial duties, they are but discharging the obligation they are under to their parents.—As the above-mentioned classification of duties is both natural and scriptural, I shall adopt it, and proceed immediately to the consideration of those of the first class, namely:

## DUTIES WHICH WE OWE TO GOD.

The duties which belong to this class, are often distinguished from those belonging to the other, by being called *religious* duties, and duties of *piety*: but in the scriptures, this branch of holy practice is usually denominated *godliness*; denoting that *God* is the immediate object of the affections and services which pertain to it. My design is, not to bring into view every thing which might be comprehended under this class of good works, but enough only to show, that truth can not be reduced to practice, short of its terminating in a life of godliness. Some of those duties or practices which are essential to a godly life, will be considered under the following Articles.

## ARTICLE I.

THE WORSHIP OF GOD OCCUPIES THE FIRST PLACE AMONG THE DUTIES OF GODLINESS.

IN scripture, the term *worship* is sometimes applied to that respect, or deference, which it is proper for one mortal to show to another, on account of his superior dignity of character, or his elevated station in society. God himself has required this deference from inferiors to their superiors. He requires children to honor their father and mother; the young, to rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man; and subjects, to pay homage to their king. When, on a certain occasion, king David and his subjects had made a very liberal offering for the building of the temple, the whole congregation of Israel “worshipped the Lord, and the king.” We can not suppose, however, that with such a spirit of piety as then actuated them, they worshipped their king, in the same sense they did their God; or that their king would have consented to receive any such worship. The passage can mean no more than this; that while they paid *religious wor-*

*ship* to their God, they paid to their monarch that reverential deference which was due to his kingly authority.

Worship, in its appropriate, and (in the scriptures) almost its only meaning, is the expression of *supreme* regard and confidence. There is no being but "Him that is higher than the highest," who can reasonably be made the object of such worship. Until we arrive at the source of all dependent existence, intelligence, holiness, and blessedness, we have not found the being who can claim religious homage, or in whom we can repose supreme confidence. This makes a broad line of distinction between the worship we are required to pay to the Most High, and that honor which is to be given to our fellow men. It is not wrong to ask needed favors of *them*; or to render thanks for such as they have conferred on us; nor to solicit their forgiveness, when we have trespassed against them. But were we to ask their aid, or to give them thanks for aid afforded, as though it came from them as its *source*: or were we to ask their forgiveness, as though they had the power to pardon sins, and to secure us from enduring the penalties of the divine law, it would be giving to the creature the place of the Creator. As Jehovah is an eternal, self-existent being, from whom all other existence is derived, and on whom it is entirely and constantly dependent, he requires (and how infinitely just is the requisition) all his intelligent offspring to feel and conduct towards him, as the God in whose hand their breath is, and whose are all their ways. On this point, he could not have made known his will more explicitly, than he has done in these words: THOU SHALT WORSHIP THE LORD THY GOD, AND HIM ONLY SHALT THOU SERVE. We are here commanded to worship Him, and forbidden to worship any besides Him.

The worship of God, under the New Testament dispensation, has only two distinct branches, namely, *prayer* and *praise*. Under the Old Testament dispensation, it was a part of their worship to offer to God "the calves of the stall;" but now there is nothing more required than to render "the calves of our lips." By *praise*, as distinguished from *prayer*, is meant the singing of "psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs." Of these two parts of worship, *prayer* holds by far the most prominent place. By this it is not meant, that thanksgiving is less important than supplication; (for thanksgiving constitutes no inconsiderable part of a devout prayer;) but the praising of God in measured lines, or by musical modulations of the voice, is not, like prayer, absolutely indispensable to a life of piety. These two branches of worship will both receive our attention, though the first will claim the greatest share of it. Let us now with a devout spirit, enter on a consideration of the duty of

## P R A Y E R . \*

What I have to say on this subject, will be comprised under the following heads: the *obligation* to the duty—its *nature*—its *benefits*—and the proper *occasions* for its performance. Let us consider,

\* It may be proper for the author to state, that the greater portion of what follows on the subject of prayer, though originally prepared for this work, he has already given to the public in the form of a Tract. It constitutes No. 271 of the American Tract Society's series.

## I. THE OBLIGATION TO PRAYER.

This duty, which is in perfect accordance with the dictates of reason, is expressly and abundantly enjoined in the holy scriptures. It is enjoined,

1. By *precept*. The following are a few of the many passages, which require the performance of this duty. "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near." "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." "Thus saith the Lord, I will yet for this be inquired of (i. e. prayed to) by the house of Israel, to do it for them." Ps. l. 15; cxxii. 6. Isa. lv. 6; lxii. 6, 7. Ezek. xxxvi. 37. Sacrificial offerings were confined to the former dispensation, but prayer is rendered obligatory under both dispensations. The New Testament abounds with injunctions to prayer. Scarcely any other duty was so frequently inculcated by Christ. Take the following instances: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Luke xi. 9; xviii. 1. Matt. xxvi. 41.

Prayer is much insisted on by the apostles, in their letters to the churches; particularly by Paul, who wrote the greater part of them. Paul writes to the Romans, "Continue instant in prayer:" to the Ephesians, "Pray always, with all prayer and supplication, in the Spirit:" to the Philippians, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God:" to the Colossians, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;" and to the Thessalonians, "Pray without ceasing." Rom. xii. 12. Eph. vi. 18. Phil. iv. 6. Col. iv. 2. Thess. v. 17. James called on Christians to pray one for another; assuring them that "the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Peter exhorted them to "watch unto prayer," and to cast all their cares upon God, as one who cared for them. John did not neglect to enforce this duty: nor did Jude, although all he wrote is comprised in one chapter. Jam. v. 16. 1 Pet. iv. 7; v. 7. 1 John, v. 14—16. Jude, ver. 20.

2. By *example*. Those who lived before the flood, called on the name of the Lord. Gen. iv. 26. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are all described as men of prayer. Gen. xviii. 23—33; xxiv. 63; xxxii. 9—32. Those illustrious descendants of theirs, whose names adorn the pages of sacred history—statesmen and monarchs, as well as priests and prophets—are all represented as men who had communion with God. What reader of the Old Testament history is ignorant of the fact, that a spirit of devotion marked the character of such *men* as Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Elijah, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel? and of such *women* as Hannah, Deborah, and Esther?

The worthies of the New Testament, both male and female, are de-



scribed as persons who conscientiously regarded this duty. We know this was the case with Christ himself. He prayed much. To engage in this duty, he arose early, and sat up late : he was known to continue all night in prayer to God. Mark i. 35, and vi. 46, 47. Luke vi. 12.

3. The scriptures inculcate this duty as *universal*. "I will," said one who spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost, "that men pray every where." As we can never remove from under the dominion of the Most High, nor cease to need his merciful protection, we can never be freed either from the obligation or necessity of prayer. Daniel, residing at Babylon, the seat of a pagan empire, felt both. Nehemiah prayed at Shushan as well as at Jerusalem ; Jonah, in the whale's belly ; and Paul and Silas, in the prison. This duty extends its claims to all classes of society—to men in secular life, as well as those in the holy ministry—to rulers as well as private citizens—to the rich as well as the poor. None are so exalted as to be above, nor so depressed as to be below, either the obligation or privilege of prayer. The servant of Abraham prayed to the same God to which his master prayed, and was equally accepted. From the claims of this duty, no age or condition in life is exempt. "Both *young men and maidens, old men and children*, let them praise the name of the Lord." The *little child*, as well as the aged man, should kneel before the Lord his Maker. Psalm cxlviii. 12, 13. 1 Samuel, i. 28. Luke ii. 49, 52.

4. The scriptures represent this duty as *essential to Christian character*. "Just and devout"—"giving alms unto the people, and *praying to God always*," are joined together to constitute the character of the good man. Luke ii. 25. Acts x. 2. None are considered as giving more certain indications of a wicked heart than those who say, "What is the Almighty, that we should serve him ? and what profit shall we have, if we pray unto him ?" Job xxi. 15. An immoral life is not a surer index of an unsanctified heart, than a life without prayer. Nor is it any more certain, that a renovation of heart will transform the immoral into a moral man, than that it will convert the prayerless into a praying man. "Behold he prayeth," is the scripture announcement of a sinner's conversion to God : and a neglect of this duty is considered as furnishing sufficient proof of the unsoundness of any man's religion, however promising it may have been. Acts ix. 11. Job xxvii. 10.

## II. THE NATURE OF PRAYER.

Though the scriptures thus inculcate the obligation to prayer, they are very far from approving everything which bears the name. The Pharisees made long prayers, and yet to the holy Jesus no class of sinners were more offensive. Matt. v. 20 ; vi. 5. It concerns us all to know, what are the *essential characteristics* of that prayer which God will accept. The scriptures represent it under a variety of phraseology ; as, "drawing near to God"—"speaking unto the Lord"—"declaring to him our ways"—"pouring out our heart before him"—"coming to the throne of grace," &c. Psalm lxxiii. 28 ; Gen. xviii. 27. Psalm cxix. 26 ; lxii. 8. Heb. iv. 16. It has, by men uninspired, been well defined to be "the offering up of our desires to God, for things agreeable to his will." Without *desires*, there can be no prayer ; and none that is good, except the desires be *holy* ; and

these must be *offered up to God*. There may be prayer, without the prostration of the body or the moving of the lips, but not without the lifting up of the soul to God. Psalm xxv. 1.

Prayer is the language of *dependence*. It is poverty and emptiness, coming to infinite fullness for supplies—ignorance, coming to wisdom for instruction and guidance—weakness, leaning on Almighty strength—pollution, repairing to the fountain which is opened for sin and uncleanness—guilt, pleading, not for a repeal of the law, but for the forgiveness of sin through an infinite atonement. To be prepared to engage in this duty, we must be *humble*. The pride of our heart must be brought down, and the Lord alone exalted. We must have *faith*; believing that God is, and that he is infinitely great and good; both able and willing to answer prayer. Nor can we be prepared to pray, unless we exercise *repentance* for sin; for if we regard iniquity in our heart, the Lord will not hear us. A *submissive spirit* is another requisite for prayer. The acceptableness of the duty is increased as much by the cordiality of the submission, as by the strength of our faith. In our Savior's prayer in the garden of agony, his submission, though wonderfully great, did not imply either the absence or weakness of his trust in God. Indeed, the graces of the Spirit, among which faith and submission hold a conspicuous place, do not seek each other's destruction; on the contrary, they afford mutual aid in rendering prayer both more acceptable and prevalent. A *forgiving spirit* is not less essential to the duty, than faith and submission. On this point, our divine Teacher is very explicit: "When ye stand praying, *forgive*, if ye have aught against any; that your Father also, which is in heaven, may forgive your trespasses." While we are in the attitude of prayer, pleading with God to forgive us, we must do the same toward our fellow-men from whom we have received injuries. As prayer includes thanksgiving for favors received, a *thankful spirit* is indispensable to a right performance of the duty. Isa. lxvi. 2. Heb. xi. 6. Psalm lxvi. 18. Matt. xxvi. 39. Mark xi. 25. Phil. iv. 6.

In prayer, we have concern with *each of the persons of the Godhead*. We address the *Father*, in the name of the *Son*, by the special aid of the *Spirit*. This is all spread before us in one short verse: "For through *Him* we both have access, by one *Spirit*, unto the *Father*." Eph. ii. 18. The Son directs us to pray to the Father in his name. Should we forget this direction, and venture to go in our own name, our petitions will remain unanswered. It is equally necessary that we remember our dependence on the Holy Spirit, lest, by rejecting his proffered aid, and trusting in our own gifts, we incur the guilt, like Nadab and Abihu, of offering strange fire before the Lord. Rom. viii. 26, 27. Jude 20. Levit. x. 1. Should our devotions be regulated by the best of forms, still if the Spirit do not help our infirmities, we can not pray.

*The matter of prayer* is very copious. There is no sin we commit, but it is to be confessed; no mercy we need, for the body or the soul, for ourselves or others, but we are to ask it of God; no favor received, for which we are not to render thanks; no duty to be done, nor affliction to be borne, but we need help in it from God. "In *every thing*," said the apostle, "by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiv-

ing let your requests be made known unto God." Phil. iv. 6. We are required to intercede for our children and relatives, our civil rulers and spiritual guides, for the church and the unbelieving world. Genesis xliii. 14; xxv. 21. 1 Tim. ii. 1—3. Psalm cxxii. 6. Rom. v. 1.

The *burden* of our petitions, however, should be for those blessings which are spiritual and enduring. Of six petitions in the *Lord's prayer*, only one relates to the things of the present life. These things are a mere scaffolding, on which to stand while putting up an edifice, that is to remain when the earth and the works thereof shall be burnt up.

We should especially pray for the *influences of the Holy Spirit*, which our Lord has represented as comprehending all the good we need. Compare Matt. vii. 11 with Luke, xi. 13. The atonement is already made; the scriptures are written: the great blessing which now remains to be received, is the gift of the Spirit. If this gift be withheld, all other means will fail to effect the conversion of a single sinner. Until the Spirit be poured from on high, the earth will remain a moral wilderness. And when any part of it is changed into a fruitful field, and becomes *the Lord's vineyard*, it can not retain its fruitfulness, except by a continuance of this divine watering; which it needs, not once a year, but *every moment*. Isa. xxxii. 15; xxvii. 3.

The scriptures, as we have seen, encourage us to bring every thing into our prayers; yet not into the same exercise. The prayers we find in them are *adapted to existing circumstances*. When Abraham stood up as an intercessor, to turn away the divine wrath from Sodom, he adapted his petitions to their necessities. And when his pious servant went in search of a wife for Isaac, he prayed for success in the object of his journey. Jacob's prayer, at the time he was expecting to meet his incensed brother, was adapted to this exigency: "Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau." When Moses interceded for the children of Israel, whom the Lord had threatened to destroy, he adapted his petition to the urgency of their case. David, on hearing that Ahithopel was among the conspirators made this appropriate petition: "O Lord, I pray thee turn the counsel of Ahithopel into foolishness." When Solomon prayed at the first opening of the temple, his prayer was *dedicatory*. The Savior's intercessory prayer for his disciples, which he made just as he was about to leave them, was peculiarly appropriate to that interesting occasion. Gen. xviii. 20—33; xxiv. 12—14; xxxii. 9—12. Ex. xxxii. 31, 32. 2 Sam. xv. 31. 1 Kin. viii. John xvii. The cases to which I have referred were occasional prayers. In our stated devotions, whether public or private, there are some petitions which need to be reiterated. Our blessed Lord taught us to pray every day for our daily bread; and doubtless he intended we should pray with no less frequency, that the kingdom of God might be advanced, and his will be done on earth, as in heaven; also that our sins might be forgiven, and that temptation might either not be permitted to assail us, or be successfully resisted. Were petitions of this nature to be as seldom made as ordination and dedicatory prayers, what would become of the work of grace in our hearts, and of revivals of religion in our churches.



The prayers of the Bible also abound with *arguments*. This is true of the prayers of Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, David, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Nehemiah, Daniel, and also of the prayers of Christ. Gen. xviii. 23—33; xxxii. 9—12. Num. xiv. 13—19. Josh. vii. 7—9. Psalm xxv. 11. 2 Chron. xx. 5—12. 2 Kings, xix. 14—19. Nehemiah i. Daniel ix. John xvii. The Lord's prayer concludes with three strong arguments, or reasons, why the preceding petitions should be granted. These arguments are not selfish. They all honor God. We pray him to answer our requests, because the kingdom, whose advancement is sought, is his *own*—the power to advance it is in his *own hands*—and the glory will redound to his *own great name* for ever. The more perfectly we understand and love the character of God, and the great principles he has adopted for the government of his moral kingdom and the redemption of a fallen world; and the more fully we imbibe the spirit of his holy word, the better prepared we shall be to “order our cause before him, and fill our mouth with arguments.” Job xxiii. 4.

*The style of prayer* demands consideration. This, when the exercise is extemporaneous, depends wholly on the person who leads. Rhetorical flourishes and bombastic expressions, never appear so improper as in this exercise. Let him who is speaking in prayer but keep in mind, that he is dust and ashes, addressing the Lord of heaven and earth; that he is a guilty sinner, pleading for pardon before the mercy-seat; and let him at the same time possess the spirit of adoption, and it can not fail to give solemnity, humility, and a childlike simplicity to his attitude, voice, and language. Violent gestures, a noisy utterance, and dictatorial and censorious language, are utterly incompatible with the nature of this duty. Every thing calculated to give pain to devout worshipers, or diminish our awe of the Divine Majesty, should be carefully avoided.

### III. THE BENEFIT OF PRAYER.

1. *It honors God.* It is a practical acknowledgement of his being, perfections, and providence; and of our entire dependence on him for all we possess. Those creatures of God, who never repair to his mercy-seat to ask for needed favors or counsel, virtually deny *his existence*. By such he is not glorified. See Psalm l. 23, with Mal. iii. 13—15. Is it not evident to all, that God is honored by the praying, rather than by the prayerless man? by the praying, rather than by the prayerless family? and by a praying community, whether town, city, state, or kingdom, rather than by such as call not on his name?

2. *Prayer promotes both the sanctification and enjoyment of those who engage in the duty.* That immediate converse which we have with God, when we pray, gives us uncommonly clear views of his being, and perfections; and the acquaintance we form with ourselves, while on our knees before him, is the most thorough and useful. Hence prayer greatly promotes repentance for sin. It also promotes faith in Christ; for we present all our petitions in his worthy name. Here also we gain the most correct and impressive views of Divine Providence, views which tranquilize our troubled minds, and draw forth our gratitude and praise. Nothing more powerfully excites

benevolent feelings toward our fellow-men, enemies as well as friends, than to pray for them. Indeed prayer, considered as a means of cleansing the heart and improving the character, is of such importance, that none can be prepared for heaven without it.

Nor is it less essential to our *enjoyment*. "It is good for me to draw near unto God," said one who knew what nearness to God was. In prosperity, no joy can be compared with this; and nothing is like it to sweeten the bitter cup of affliction. "Is any among you afflicted," says an apostle, "let him pray." James v. 13.

One would suppose that without prayer, as the means of relieving the troubled breast, the evils of the present life would be quite insupportable. "I wonder," said an aged saint, who had been speaking of the comforts he derived from prayer and meditation, during the wakeful hours of night, "I wonder what those old people do for comfort, who have such sleepless hours, and yet have no God to think of, or pray to."

3. *Prayer is prevalent with God.* "The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man, availeth much." It is the key which unlocks the treasury of heaven. God has said to the children of men, "Ask, and ye shall receive." And again, "Ye have not, because ye ask not." Some are of the opinion, that prayer is not a necessary means of procuring our blessings, but only of preparing our hearts for their reception. That this preparation of heart is one very important result of genuine prayer, I fully believe; but I *as* fully believe, that the *procuring* of blessings is another of its results—that there is a necessary and inseparable connection between our asking God for favors, and his bestowing favors upon us. Methinks none can read the Bible with the least attention, and not perceive, that they who pray aright, have the promise of *receiving* blessings, as well as of being prepared to enjoy them when bestowed. See Zech. x. 1. Luke xi. 13. Matt. ix. 37, 38. 2 Thess. iii. 1. If prayer exerts no influence in obtaining blessings, why does it include *intercession*? The very object of this department of the duty, is to help *others*; and frequently, those who are absent, and know not that prayer is made for them. Do we not pray for the sick, to obtain for *them* the blessing of health? Do not saints pray for sinners, to procure *their* conversion, rather than for the purpose of preparing themselves to enjoy it?

But some will say, "how can prayer be classed with *operative* means for the procurement of good? We can perceive a connection between the cultivation of the earth, and its bringing forth fruits—between the medicines administered by the physician, and the restoration of the patient; but how can the breath of prayer have any influence in causing a shower of rain, or in saving the sick?" Such objectors would do well to remember, that in the cases specified, neither culture nor medicines are efficacious, on account of any power of their own to produce these results. God himself is the efficient Agent. "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man." It is He also, "who healeth all our diseases." Yet we have no reason to expect that he will operate to produce these effects, except in the use of his appointed means. And has he not appointed prayer, as manifestly as any other means, for the procurement of good from his

hand? If, then, we were unable to perceive any more natural connection between our asking and receiving, than between the blowing of rams' horns and the falling of Jericho's walls, still we ought not to doubt the existence of such a connection, nor the wisdom of God in establishing it. But why should prayer be thought an *unnatural* means of obtaining blessings from the hand of God? Who can say, that the connection was not as natural and proper between Jacob's *spiritual wrestlings* in prayer, and his prevailing with God, as that which exists between the muscular efforts of the *literal wrestler*, and his success in overpowering his antagonist? If God puts honor on that strength which lies in bones and sinews, by rendering it effectual for the attainment of a desired object, much more may he be expected to honor those holy efforts of mind which are put forth in the fervent prayers of the righteous.

Prayer, unlike all other means, *exerts its influence on God himself*. Renouncing dependence on all created objects, we say unto God, "Neither know we what to do, but our eyes are unto *thee*." 2 Chron. xx. 12. That God views the prayers of his people as designed to exert an influence on *himself*, is made evident by his saying to Moses, when he was about to intercede for the idolatrous Israelites, "Let me alone." Ex. xxxii. 10.

That the prayers of the righteous are prevalent with God, appears also in the dispensations of his *providence and grace*. The prayers of Jacob at Peniel were prevalent. The prayers of Moses and Joshua were also prevalent. So were the prayers of Hannah, Samuel, and David. The scriptures of the Old Testament furnish many other instances of evident answers to prayer: see Gen. xxxii. Ps. cvi. 23. Josh. x. 12. 1 Sam. i. 27; vii. 9—12. Ps. xviii. 6—50. 1 Kin. xviii. 36—45. 2 Chron. xiv. 9—15; xx. 5—30; xxxii. 20—23. Ezra viii. 21—31. Neh. i. 2. Dan. ix. 21—23. Est. iv. 15, compared with the subsequent parts of the book. The New Testament history agrees with the Old, in representing prayer as *efficacious*. The ceaseless prayers of the church delivered Peter from prison and from death. And surely that praying breath was not spent in vain, which called down such a mighty influence, that in one day, three thousand souls were turned from the power of Satan unto God. See Acts i. 14; ii. 41; xii. 5—17. To be the *Hearer of prayer*, is the memorial of Zion's God throughout all generations. Ps. lxxv. 2.

Could we have the history of the Christian church fully placed before us, it would furnish innumerable cases where fervent, united, and persevering prayer for the outpouring of the Spirit, has been answered in the bestowment of this greatest of all blessings. Many years ago, when revivals of religion were less frequent in this country, I well remember hearing a Christian pastor, who was watching for souls, express strong confidence that the Lord was about to pour out his Spirit on his people; assigning as his reason, that *the Jacobs among them were wrestling*. A few months after, on seeing him again, and inquiring, Do your Jacobs continue to wrestle? he replied, with an overflowing heart, *The blessing has come*. This case has nothing peculiar in it; the chronicles of "the Israel of God," could furnish thousands of similar examples.



Who can tell what a multitude of the seed of God's people have been brought into the fold of Christ, in answer to the prayers of their *pious parents*? The case of Monica, the mother of Augustine, whose fervent and long continued prayers for her son, were answered in his conversion and singular usefulness to the cause of truth, is well known in the history of the church. In a sketch given, a few years since, of the life of an aged Christian in the state of Maine, it was particularly stated, that he had been observed to pray much for his children, and his children's children, and more remote posterity—not that they might abound in wealth, but in grace, and the comforts of the Holy Ghost. And when in a good old age he was gathered to his fathers, and was followed to the grave by an uncommon number of descendants, almost all of them, who had come to mature years, appeared to be the humble disciples of Christ. Were every good man to write his own biography, there would be found in it many a record similar to that of the Psalmist: "Verily, God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer." He would state, At such and such a time, the Lord mercifully prepared my heart to pray; and in such and such ways, he made it manifest that he had caused his ear to hear. Ps. lxvi. 19; x. 17; cxvi. 1, 2. The devout man rests satisfied that the prayer which God requires, and which is dictated by his Spirit, is always acceptable to him, and that it invariably procures, either the specific blessing sought, or something else which is preferable. 2 Cor. xii. 7—9.

Let it here be remembered, that the scriptures do not speak of the *exclusive acceptableness* of the prayers of the *righteous*, with an intention to exempt the wicked from *obligation* to pray; nor indeed to discourage them from attempting the duty; but rather to make them feel the necessity of an inward and radical change to render their prayers, and all their other performances, pleasing to a holy God. As God commands all men every where to repent, so he commands all men every where to pray; but he commands them to pray, "lifting up holy hands." Acts xvii. 30. 1 Tim. ii. 8. Living without prayer, God may continue to you for a time the bounties of his providence; but the light of his countenance you have not; your sins are not forgiven, nor have you a single promise relating to the life to come. And those gifts which you have, without asking them of God, or giving him thanks for them, will soon be remanded; and then, if not before, you will be able to "discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not." Mal. iii. 18.

#### IV. THE OCCASIONS FOR PRAYER.

The apostle exhorts Christians to pray with "all prayer"—that is, in all those ways which our various circumstances and relations in society may call for. Two, and even many of the humble disciples of Christ, may unite in the same prayer, and with "one accord"—in the same adorations, confessions, petitions, and ascriptions of praise.—They will feel that they are all the same guilty creatures, coming to the same merciful Creator, and in the name of a common Mediator. Such prayer, whether it be pronounced with one mouth, or many using

a common form, should unite the hearts of all. No one should imagine he has prayed, merely because he has heard another pray. It is a union of souls, not an assemblage of bodies, which gives strength to prayer. The Savior taught his disciples that the *agreement* of two, would augment its prevalence. Matt. xviii. 19. When Daniel had Nebuchadnezzar's dream, with its interpretation, to find out, he applied to three of his countrymen, whom he knew to be praying characters, to unite with him in desiring mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; assuming the principle, that a union of hearts increases the prevalence of prayer. This is true, whether those whose hearts are united, should form a meeting for social prayer, or should agree to present their common request in their respective closets. The most important branches of this duty, are the following:

1. *Sanctuary prayer.* None can doubt that prayer is a proper exercise for the Lord's house. Christ called the temple "a house of prayer," and the appellation is with equal propriety applied to a Christian sanctuary. It is the King's business which is here transacted, and He claims to be consulted about it. Here the ordinances are administered, and the officers of the church solemnly consecrated; and both these exercises are to be accompanied with prayer. Matt. xxvi. 26, 27. Acts xiv. 23. Here also the gospel is preached; and it must be with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, or it will be without effect. And surely, we can not expect the descent of the blessed Spirit upon a prayerless assembly! See 2 Chron. xxx. 27. Ezra ix. 4—15. Ps. cxvi. 17—19. Matt. xi. 25—30. Acts vi. 4. 1 Cor. xiv. 14—17. 1 Tim. ii. 1.

The prayers of the sanctuary are an interesting part of its services. They ought to embrace a greater number of objects than social prayer in general, but not to the exclusion of a special remembrance of the wants of the assembly. Prayer should not be substituted for preaching; it should ever be considered as an address to God, not to the people; and yet the influence which is exerted on an assembly by a solemn and devout prayer, is often as direct and manifest as that exerted by preaching.

2. *Prayer meetings.* In such meetings, Christians are advantageously situated to strive together in their prayers to God for the advancement of his kingdom. Such was the meeting held by the hundred and twenty disciples in the upper room, before the great effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost; and that also at the house of Mary, where many were gathered together to pray for the liberation of Peter. This class of meetings may be either *ordinary*, to ask for those blessings which we always stand in need of; or *extraordinary*, to pray for some particular object, the importance of which is suggested by passing events. Not being designed for those services which are peculiar to the pastor, they do not necessarily require his presence, or that of any of the officers of the church. But if wholly composed of its officers, (and is it not desirable that this should sometimes be the case?) still they would be *prayer meetings*. Would we have these seasons of devotion interesting and profitable, we must remember them beforehand in our closets, and go to them with praying hearts. Nor ought those to neglect this preparation, who do not expect to lead in these exer-

cises. Let a company of *praying* people come together in a *prayerful* frame, and they can hardly fail to have a profitable *prayer* meeting. The reading of some short and pertinent passage from the scriptures, or from some religious book or periodical; brief and well-adapted remarks or exhortations, and songs of praise, may each help to quicken their devotions. When the meeting is more particularly intended for conference and discussion, as is doubtless sometimes desirable, a greater portion of the time may be occupied in reading and conversation. But whether it be called a conference, or a prayer meeting, it ought ever to be sanctified by the spirit of devotion, and the love of the truth. However lightly many may think of these unostentatious assemblies, they have been found almost indispensable to the Christian's growth in grace, and greatly instrumental in bringing forward and sustaining revivals of religion.

The *Monthly Concert*, observed on the first Monday of every month, is a prayer meeting, and one of uncommon interest. It extends to all nations where the Christian religion is embraced in its purity. It came into existence simultaneously with the missionary and other benevolent Institutions of these latter days; and when it is viewed in connection with the special efforts now making by the various denominations of evangelical Christians, it may be considered as their united declaration, that they feel themselves entirely dependent on God for success in all their attempts for the conversion of the world. Could we see this concert observed by greater numbers, and with a deeper interest—could we have reason to believe that every Christian observed it, either in a social or secret manner, presenting both prayers and pecuniary offerings, we should have ground for strong hopes of the near approach of millennial glory. Some other days are also set apart by Christians, to pray in concert for particular objects. That for Sabbath Schools, is somewhat extensively observed on the second Monday in the month. These, and numerous other objects, are of sufficient importance to draw forth many of the prayers of Zion.

3. *Prayer among select friends.* We read of Christ's praying with the twelve, and also of his selecting three of their number to go up with him into a mountain to pray. Luke ix. 28. There is perhaps no *social* prayer so sweet as that which is made by a few select friends, who, concerning the things of the kingdom of God, are every way like-minded. In its freedom from restraint, it resembles the devotions of the closet, and at the same time receives strength by a union of hearts; and while it brings the worshipers near to God, it has a powerful influence in promoting among themselves, what the apostolic benediction implores for all saints, "The *communion* of the Holy Ghost." Under this head, may be included those seasons of prayer which Christians sometimes do, and should oftener, connect with their social visits. An interview designed to be closed with prayer, will, on this very account, be rendered more edifying. Who has not been affected, in reading the narrative of Paul's taking his leave of the Ephesian elders at Miletus, and of other friends on the shore at Tyre? In both these instances, the parting prayer is, to the pious reader, the most affecting particular. Acts xx. 36; xxi. 5.

This kind of social prayer will include those seasons, either occa-



sional or stated, when a few Christian friends meet *on purpose* to unbosom the emotions of their hearts to each other, and to their heavenly Father. It is doubtless entirely proper, that meetings of this class should often be wholly composed of *females*. When the scriptures narrate the devout praises of Moses and the children of Israel at the Red Sea, they add that *Miriam* took a timbrel in her hand, and all the *women* went out after her. After Esther had given a charge to Mordecai, to gather the Jews of Shushan to keep a fast, she adds, *I* also and my *maidens* will fast likewise. Ex. xv. 20, 21. Est. iv. 16. See also Judg. xxi. 21. Luke i. 38—56. There are many pious females who, without neglecting their domestic concerns, or withdrawing themselves from the public prayer meetings, can devote an hour or two each week to a meeting of their own; and there is reason to believe that meetings of this description, are at this moment exerting a very happy influence in raising the tone of female piety, in promoting the charitable objects of the day, and in calling down the blessing of the Holy Spirit.

4. *Family prayer.* All the families of the earth ought to call on the name of the Lord, and have reason to fear the pouring out of his fury upon them, if they refuse to do it. Jer. x. 25. No house should be without its family altar. Abraham, the father of all who have true faith, set us a worthy example: wherever he pitched his tent, he erected an altar, and called on the name of the Lord. Joshua resolved, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." David worshiped in the sanctuary, and then returned to bless his household. Gen. xii. 7, 8; xiii. 18. Josh. xxiv. 15. 2 Sam. vi. 20. Our Savior, whose example is law, observed this duty as far as his circumstances in life permitted. He had no other family than his twelve disciples; with these he daily ate, traveled, and conversed; and with these he prayed. By his praying sometimes with the whole number, and at other times with a part, has he not encouraged parents to adopt a similar practice in relation to their children? Luke ix. 18; xi. 1, with ix. 28, and Matthew xxvi. 36, 37. Every precept which requires parents religiously to educate their children, obliges them to the performance of this duty. To profess to bring them up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," and yet not pray with them—what can be more contradictory!

The spirit and order of family worship, are of great importance. At the regular hours for its observance, parents, children, and domestics, should all be assembled in one place, and their business be discontinued, while the word of God is read, or his praises sung, and the throne of grace addressed. All should listen to the reading, and join in the other exercises. The greater the number of praying souls in the domestic circle, the more interest will it give to this exercise. When the father and the mother are both heirs of the grace of life, and live in character, their prayers will not be hindered, and may be expected to avail before God. 1 Pet. iii. 1—7. And when the children and servants become heirs of the same grace, that house may truly be called a *Bethel*, a house of prayer.

It is to be regretted that this service should ever be rendered tedious, by long, formal, and unappropriate prayers. An understanding richly

enlightened with divine truth, and a heart warmed with divine love, constitute the best preparation for the duty, and will render the exercise edifying, whether brief, or more protracted. The state of the family, the chapter which is read, or the hymn which is sung, may all suggest matter for the prayer. The family sins should be confessed, their mercies acknowledged, and their wants spread before the mercy-seat. All are to be prayed for collectively, and if circumstances call for it, individually. Such particularity arrests attention. In a family of the writer's acquaintance, a little girl at the age of eight, appeared to become a subject of renewing grace, whose attention was first arrested at the family altar, by hearing her father pray for *the children*. In that branch of domestic worship, already hinted at, when the family are taken in smaller portions, or individually, into the secret chamber, the petitions can be more minutely specific and adapted. Dr. Cotton Mather had fifteen children, and lived to see the greater part of them die in the Lord. When they were capable of understanding him, he would take them alone, one by one, and after many affectionate admonitions to the child, would pray with him, and make him the witness of the agonies and strong cries with which, on his behalf, he addressed the throne of grace.

In this department of the worship of the family, Christian *mothers* are under obligation to take a large share. This falls fairly within their appropriate sphere of action; and it gives them opportunity to labor advantageously for the salvation of their beloved offspring.—Prov. xxxi. 2. When the father is absent from home, or the mother is left in widowhood, she becomes the head of the family, and to her it belongs to offer the daily sacrifice of prayer and praise on the domestic altar.

The *giving of thanks at our meals*, is comprehended in family worship. This practice is enforced by the example of our divine Lord, who gave thanks not only at the sacramental supper, but repeatedly at other meals. Luke ix. 16; xxiv. 30. Paul, on board the ship, “took bread and gave thanks to God, in presence of them all.” Acts xxvii. 35. This act of worship, though very brief, is one which frequently renews its claims upon us, and is too important to be neglected, or performed in a cold and formal manner.

5. *Prayer connected with pastoral visits.* It is expressly required that the elders of the church should pray with the sick. James v. 14, 15. Prayer is very properly connected with other pastoral visits. As the ministers of Christ are under obligation to teach, not only in public, but from house to house, so their corresponding duty is to pray in private families, as well as in the public assembly. Nor can any doubt the propriety of connecting prayer with the religious visits, which are made by the subordinate officers of the church, or by other members appointed to this service.

6. *Prayer in schools.* Prayer is a suitable exercise in schools of every description—not only in those devoted to religious instruction, as Sabbath schools and theological seminaries, but also in schools of science. Nothing is of greater moment to the welfare of our country, than the character of its schools. In these, the children and youth of our land are preparing to act on the stage of life; and it is incon-

ceivably important that they should all be exerting a good influence on the youthful character. The blessing of God should be implored on them all, by the religious community ; and in them all, by their respective teachers. From the university down to the infant school, none should be without prayer—solemn, affectionate, and appropriate prayer. It is calculated, perhaps above all other means, to impress the minds of the young ; and it is the appointed way of calling down upon them the blessing of heaven.

7. *Prayer connected with the transaction of public business.* “He, whose name alone is Jehovah, is the Most High over all the earth”—“the Governor among the nations.” He requires that we should acknowledge him in all our ways : and this requisition extends to us in our *national* as well as individual capacity. What can be more strictly proper, than the practice of opening our *legislative assemblies* with a solemn and devout recognition of our dependence on Him, and of his supreme dominion over us. How suitable, that the legislators of the nation should come, in the attitude of prayer, to the Divine Lawgiver, and ask him to assist them to frame such laws for the nation, as shall resemble the laws he has made for the universe ; and to preserve them from enacting any law which shall contravene his own. Nor is it less proper that *courts of justice* should be opened by solemn prayer to God. He is the “Judge of all the earth ;” yet he concerns himself with the proceedings of all the inferior courts throughout his extensive dominion. “Take heed,” said king Jehoshaphat to the judges of his courts : “Take heed what ye do ; for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now, let the fear of the Lord be upon you, take heed and do it ; for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.” 2 Chron. xix. 6, 7. Let such sentiments as these impress the public mind, and prayer to God will accompany the administration of justice ; prayer, that judges, jurors, and counselors, may possess discernment and impartiality ; that witnesses may be preserved from perjury, or the misrepresentation of facts ; and that righteous decisions may in every instance be given.

8. *Ejaculatory prayer.* This branch of devotion has no restrictions of time or place. It can be breathed out in solitude, or in the midst of company. It may be so intense as to divert our attention from every other pursuit, or it may co-exist with vigorous exercises of the body and mind. It may accompany the godly man while employed in the labors of his field or shop, and the godly woman in the labors of her house. It may be protracted through all the hours of the day, whether we are at home or abroad, without interrupting our business or our journey. It was in ejaculatory prayer that the mother of Samuel poured out her soul before the Lord. 1 Sam. i. 13. This is the kind of prayer which Nehemiah offered to the King of heaven, at the very moment when presenting his petition to the king of Persia. Neh. ii. 4. The meditations in which holy David seemed so much to delight, were filled with adorations, confessions, petitions, and thanksgivings. The longest and most devotional of all his psalms, every verse of which expresses his high regard for the inspired word, appears to be a collection of such ejaculations as from time to time he had breathed out into the bosom of his God.



This is a branch of devotion to which no true Christian can be a stranger: prayer is the *breath* of every one who is born of God. Lam. iii. 56. Acts ix. 11. It may be so increased as to fill up all the vacancies of our time, sanctify all the business of life, and sweeten all its bitter cups, even at the very moment when we are drinking them off. The more constantly our hearts are engaged in holy aspirations to God, the better will be our preparation to attend on all the stated services of religion. This, like the fire which was ever kept burning upon the altar, will kindle every sacrifice. Lev. vi. 13.

9. *Closet prayer.* Though a closet is a small apartment within the house, our Savior used the word to mean any place, where, with no embarrassment, either from the fear or pride of observation, we can freely pour out our hearts in prayer to God. The devotions of the closet require both *time* and *place*. That this was the Savior's view of the matter, we learn both from what he *taught* and *practiced*. He taught us, when we were about to pray to our Father in secret, to "enter into our closet and shut the door." This direction lays us under obligation to take pains to retire from business and company. And his own example is proof, that, by entering into the closet and shutting the door, he meant we should go into a place of retirement. At one time we read of his departing, unaccompanied by any of his disciples, into a solitary place to pray; and at another, of his going up into a mountain apart to pray. Mark i. 35. Matt. xiv. 23. Jacob's prayer at Peniel belongs to this class of devotions; and to prepare himself to engage in it, he dropped all business from his hands, and secluded himself from the society of his own family.

If the *secrecy* of this department of prayer, had not been considered as a matter of some importance, the Savior would not have directed us to leave the *corners of the streets*, and go into the *closet* for its performance; nor would he have been so particular as to tell us to *shut the door*, before we entered on the duty. But what is the use, so far as secrecy is concerned, of shutting or even locking the closet door, if we should pray in so loud a tone as to be heard by those in the streets, or even by those who are in other parts of the house? The most material advantages to be derived from this particular branch of our devotions, would in this case be lost. The enjoyment of *entire freedom* in pouring out the heart before God, is among these advantages; and it is one of no small importance. God is the Christian's supreme Confident, to whom he freely unbosoms himself. He has many communications to make to his Almighty Friend, which should not be made in the hearing of his fellow men, even if they are also his fellow Christians. But should he speak so loud as to be heard by those passing in the street, or by those in other apartments of the house, what does it avail that he is himself in a secret place? Another advantage of secrecy is its influence in *checking pride*, and promoting humility. The Christian, professedly to avoid observation, retires to his secret chamber, and shuts his door, but if from this retirement he sends his voice into the streets, he might as well remain at the corners of the streets to perform his devotions. We would fain hope, that the closet prayers which are made with an audible voice, are not designed to court observation; but does not that injunction which re-

quires us, in the performance of those duties, to seek a place of concealment, virtually forbid that elevation of voice which, we can not but know, will betray our concealment? While an elevation of the voice in closet devotions, should for these reasons be avoided, it is of some importance that words should be *articulated*, in distinction from being merely *thought of*. Though the omniscient Being whom we address in prayer, stands in no need of the movement of the tongue, to make him acquainted with our desires, it is nevertheless of great use to ourselves, in fastening our attention, and in giving greater regularity, and even fervency to our petitions. But for this purpose, an articulate whisper will be abundantly sufficient.

Ejaculatory prayer, as we have seen, is of great importance; yet the prayer of the closet has the pre-eminence. This excels the other in its tendency to promote *depth* of feeling, *intimacy* of communion, and *importunity* of desire. To preserve the distinction between these two kinds of secret devotion, is of greater importance to a life of piety than many imagine. A whole day of fervent ejaculations, whether we are at home or on a journey, does not release us from obligation to remember the closet exercises of the evening.

*Does the duty of prayer require any stated seasons for its performance?* "Stated seasons," said the pious Baxter, "are the hedge of duty." He said the truth; for the breaking down of the hedge which incloses your field, would not more certainly expose the crop to be destroyed, than the relinquishment of stated seasons for your religious duties, would expose the soul to famish. It has been objected, that such regularity in religious exercises is unfavorable to devotion, and that it even implies a denial of our dependence on the Spirit. But the divine appointment of the weekly Sabbath, shows that God is not offended with regularity in our devotions; and the sacrifice offered every morning and evening in the church of Israel, is a valid argument in favor of the worship of God every morning and evening through the whole week. Concerning Solomon, or rather one greater than Solomon, it is said, "Prayer also shall be made for him *continually*, and *daily* shall he be praised." Ps. lxxii. 15. "*Every day*," said the devout Psalmist, "will I bless thee." Ps. cxlv. 2. In the life of Christ, who is our supreme example, particular mention is made of his morning and evening devotions.

Family and closet prayer should be considered as *daily* duties; and neither of them be less frequent than morning and evening. And between these two extreme parts of the day, the distance seems too great, to be passed over without some intervening regular devotion.—Is it not practicable for most, to have a stated season for closet prayer in the middle of the day? At this hour, Peter went up upon the house-top to pray. Acts x. 9. Among the *pious resolutions* of a king, who was far from being neglectful of the concerns of his kingdom, this was one: "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray." Psalm lv. 17. This is also recorded among the *pious practices* of one of the most fully occupied men who ever held an office in a king's court. Dan. vi. 10. The closet requires stated seasons, and of frequent recurrence, which must not be passed by: nor are these enough to satisfy the man of prayer. In a duty of such vital

importance, and one which is so much under individual control, it would indicate a low state of piety, always to wait for the return of the regular seasons. Every man who feels for the honor of God, and the interest of religion in his own heart, in his own family, and in the world, has much that he wishes to carry to God in prayer. And the closet is eminently the place where he unburdens himself, and fills his mouth with arguments. Here he pleads for others as well as himself. He brings before God many individual cases, both of believers and unbelievers. Here he can tell his Father who seeth in secret, everything that he both hopes and fears, concerning himself and the individuals for whom he intercedes. Is there not reason to conclude it was principally in the closet, that Paul made so many prayers for particular churches and individual believers? See Rom. i. 9. Eph. i. 15, 16. Phil. i. 3, 4. Col. i. 3. 1 Thess. i. 2. 2 Tim. i. 3. Phile. ver. 4.

There is one appendage both of social and secret prayer, the mention of which I can not in faithfulness omit; and that is *fasting*. Let none deem this a mere pharisaical, or self-righteous observance, because it was the boast of a pharisee, that he fasted twice in the week. So pharisees made many prayers, kept the Sabbath, and paid tithes: and yet prayer, sanctification of the Sabbath, and supporting the gospel, are not, of necessity, self-righteous observances. Christ fasted himself, and declared it to be his will, that after his final departure from them, his disciples should also fast. He gave a precept in relation to a right observance of this duty. See Matt. vi. 16—18. The kind of fasting to which this precept has more special application, is *private*,—such as an individual may keep at his own pleasure, without attracting public attention. From what is said in 1 Cor. vii. 5—“that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer,” it appears that fasting, as connected with prayer, was a thing well known among primitive Christians. From what we find in the Acts of the Apostles, there is reason to believe that it was uniformly connected with the prayers of the church, at their ordination solemnities. See Acts xiii. 2, 3: and xiv. 23. Fasting is not made as essential to the existence of piety, as prayer. Otherwise, Christ’s disciples could, on no consideration, have been excused from it, even during his stay with them. It is, however, a solemn accompaniment of prayer, to which it is peculiarly proper to resort in times of exigency, whether in relation to ourselves, our families, the church, or the nation. It is such an accompaniment as tends to increase its fervor and prevalence;—else why did the Savior say, concerning the ejection of an unclean spirit, “Howbeit, this kind goeth not out but by prayer and *fasting*?” From this hint, may we not conclude that the devil, that unclean spirit who has for so many ages had dominion over the race of man, will not be expelled from the earth and confined to his prison, until there has first been much *prayer* and *fasting*? Let those who are anxious to see the earth freed from his polluting influence, not wait for public fasts to be proclaimed by state or church; but like David, and Nehemiah, and Daniel, and Anna, let them appoint fasts for themselves. See 2 Sam. xii. 16. Neh. i. 4. Dan. ix. 3. Luke ii. 37. Before that foul spirit shall be cast out, and the earth be filled with the glory of the Redeemer’s kingdom



we have reason to believe, that as one means, *secret fasts* will be greatly increased, both in frequency and spirituality. This seems to be intimated in the prophecy of Zechariah. See chap. xii. 10—14.

Having said thus much on prayer, I proceed to make some brief remarks on the other branch of Divine worship, namely,

## P R A I S E .

By praise, in its most enlarged scriptural sense, is meant, *honoring God with music, both vocal and instrumental*. The Old Testament, and especially the book of Psalms, abounds with injunctions and examples in favor of both these kinds of sacred music. In the few remarks, however, which I have to make respecting this duty, I shall limit myself to *singing*.

The singing of sacred songs was a part of the divinely prescribed worship of the ancient dispensation; and it is evidently designed to have a place in the worship of the Christian church. When our Savior instituted the sacramental supper, the ceremony was brought to a close by their singing a hymn. And this was designed as a pattern for all the subsequent celebrations of that ordinance. Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, (chapter xiv. 15,) speaks of singing, as though it occupied a place in the worship of their public assemblies. In his epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, he directs them to “sing psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.” Eph. v. 19. Col. iii. 16.

Though many of our sacred songs are nothing but prayers, still, singing is a different kind of worship from praying. Our Maker has given us voices capable, not only of producing melodious sounds, but of being trained to a measured and continuous flow of such sounds; and of being so blended with numerous other and dissimilar voices, in a complicated piece of music, as that perfect and delightful harmony shall be the result. This branch of worship is designed, therefore, not only to unite the hearts of many, but also their voices. Whether *all* Christians are capable of qualifying themselves so to unite in this service, as not to detract from its edifying influence; and whether all who can thus qualify themselves, are under indispensable obligation to do so, are questions I will not undertake to solve. But this much is certain, that all, without exception, are solemnly bound to so far join in the exercise of singing, as to “make melody in their hearts unto the Lord.” To do this implies that our affections of heart correspond with the pious sentiments of the psalm or hymn which is sung. But how can such correspondence exist in *their* minds, who do not know what is sung? It is very desirable that all who are present in the solemn assembly, should be furnished with books containing the sacred songs which are used in it. But as this will rarely or never take place, how important is it that the pronunciation of the singers should be remarkably distinct.

Singing may very properly form a part of solitary as well as social worship. That direction, (Jam. v. 13,) “Is any merry, let him sing psalms,” appears to have reference to solitary worship, rather than to

that which is social.—As social prayer may be enjoyed by a small number, even the smallest number which can constitute society, so it is with singing. Paul and Silas, in the prison at Philippi, exemplified both these branches of worship; for at midnight they *prayed and sang praises unto God*.—The singing of spiritual songs forms a suitable, and often a very pleasant branch of domestic worship. It not only honors God, and quickens the devotions of the family circle, but it has a tendency to soften and unite their hearts.

While prayer is the most prominent branch of worship in the church below, it will probably be otherwise in the church above. Heaven is eminently a world of *praise*. On reaching that blessed abode, all the redeemed will bear a part in the new song which will be sung before the throne. Rev. xiv. 1—3. As they will all be blessed with grateful hearts, so they will doubtless all be furnished with musical powers. With their voices as well as their hearts, they will make melody unto the Lord. Nor will the greatness of the number, who shall unite in the song of redeeming love, expose them to the least discord. What ways will be taken to prevent discordant sounds, and secure a harmony of voices among such a multitude of worshipers, we can not tell: but we may rest assured it will be effectually done; for the worship of heaven will have nothing unpleasant to mar it.

There is reason to expect that music, as a part of divine worship, will yet undergo much improvement in the church below; especially in those blessed times when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. Nor can it be doubted that much blame rests on the church, in the present period, because she manifests no more zeal to teach her sons and daughters to sing the praises of God, as well as to read his word.

The two parts of divine worship are manifestly in harmony with each other. And not only is there a harmony between praying to God and singing his praises; but the different kinds of prayer are in perfect unison. What a manifest agreement between that species of prayer which we call ejaculatory, and all the rest. The connection is as close as that which exists between blood in the heart, and the same fluid in the veins. Ejaculations will seek to find a closet; and the prayer of the closet will lead to the erection of a family altar; yea, even of a sanctuary, provided it should not find such a house of prayer already erected. There must be some radical defect in our religion, when we like one kind of prayer, and dislike another, though enjoined by the same authority;—when, for example, we take delight in ejaculatory prayer, but none in that of the closet; or take delight in these two, but none in family prayer; or when, mayhap, we relish all the foregoing kinds, but dislike and neglect the worship of God's house. Prayer has *variety*, but no *variance*. Its having variety, however, does not render it optional with men which kind to practice. So far from this, it is our imperious duty to “pray with all prayer”—to worship God in all that variety of ways which our several circumstances and relations in life, render fit and practicable.\*

\* What must be thought of the religion of a man who says, “While I was a single man, I prayed in the closet; but when I was married, I set up family prayer, and then discontinued the duties of the closet?” Or what shall we think of a sister in the

## THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

The agreement of this Article with the whole system which we have gone over, will be more easily seen by immediately recurring to the *doctrinal* part. The *first* Article of our doctrines, announces the existence of one only living and true God; and this *first* Article of practice, holds him forth to view as the proper object of religious worship. The *second* doctrinal Article teaches us that God created, and is governing the universe, for the display of his glory. Were our practical system to leave out the worship of God, would it in any measure harmonize with these two Articles of our belief? These Articles bring into view a Being, who has more greatness and excellence than all others taken together—more than they now have, or ever can have, let them progress ever so rapidly, and ever so long. It is peculiar to this Being, that he exists of himself, while all others, rational as well as irrational, are formed and sustained by his omnipotence. The existence of such a Being constitutes the most fundamental Article of our creed. Now were the *worship* of this Being to leave no place in our list of duties, our *practical* system would, in this particular, be at utter variance with the very basis of our belief. Our creed would have a God in it, but our practical system would have none.

How unnatural and inconsistent is the supposition, that an infinitely great and good Being could bring intelligent creatures into existence, without their being under obligation to worship him. If, from the list of men's duties, you erase the worship of God, you have no connecting link which shall bind them to their Creator, or to one another. To suppose that rational creatures are at liberty, either to deny the existence of a Creator, or to withhold from him the tribute of prayer and praise, is to cast dishonor on the Author of all being.

As the perfection and happiness of intelligent creatures are respected, what could be more undesirable than to have the duties of godliness excluded from their ethics? Without such a duty as worship, it would seem as if the very relation sustained by us as creatures, made us exiles from God, and forbade us the privilege of seeing his face, and enjoying his smiles. But such a view of the Most High, is very different from that which is given us in the scriptures. There it is said, "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly." The worship of God, while it shows the distance between him and us to be infinite, at the same time does away all that is uncomfortable and forbidding in that distance, and, in a very important sense, brings us together: for it is in the act of worship that we are said to *draw nigh unto God*, and he to *draw nigh to us*. Jam. iv. 8. There is no being in the universe with whom holy creatures have such intimate communion, as with their infinite Creator.

If, with the first two Articles of doctrine, we connect the first two Articles of experience, we shall see that our system would be destitute of harmony, were it to exclude divine worship from among its duties.

church, who gives it as a reason why she neglects prayer in the closet, that her husband attends prayer in the family; and that in this she unites? Let not these be thought to be mere suppositions.



God is an infinitely great object for the drawing forth of our love, both of benevolence and complacency. Holy creatures delight in each other's society, and in having opportunities to express their mutual regard. And shall they be indulged no intercourse with Him, whom they love with supreme regard? Had creatures never become alienated from God, no arguments would ever have been needed to convince them, that to worship God is their imperative duty. They would have been more deeply sensible of the truth of this, than even filial children are of the obligation they are under to love and honor their parents. "If I be a father, where is mine honor? saith the Lord of hosts."

Prayer will be seen to have a necessary place in Christian practice, when we compare the *third* and *fourth* Articles of doctrine, with the *third* and *fourth* Articles of experience. The two Articles of *doctrine* referred to, exhibit the *law* of God, and man's disobedience to the same: and the two Articles of *experience*, show us rebellious men returning from their revolt, and that with hearts deeply humbled for their transgressions of the divine law. Now we could not conceive of such a revolution in the human mind, as that which is produced by a cordial reconciliation to God and repentance for sin, which should be followed with no confession of sin, nor supplication for mercy. But confessions and supplications suppose such a duty as prayer.

The *fifth* Article of the doctrinal series, is the *atonement* which was made for sin; and the corresponding Article in the experimental series, is *faith* in that atonement. With these Articles, the duty of prayer sweetly accords. The atonement was not made to render prayer unnecessary, but to prepare the way for it to be accepted. It is in view of the great High Priest who is passed into the heavens, that we are encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Heb. iv. 14—16

If any of the doctrines should be thought to have no agreement with such a duty as prayer, I conclude the *tenth* and *fourteenth* would be considered as belonging to this class. The former of these two doctrines supposes that the number to be saved, is definitely fixed in the counsels of the Most High; and the latter supposes that the divine counsel has fixed, with equal certainty, all other events. In view of this certainty of all future events, what efficacy, it will be said, can there be in prayer? Just as much, it may be replied, as if these events were made certain by mere foreknowledge; and just as much as if the purpose were to be formed after the prayer is poured forth. The counsel of God is wise, and therefore consistent. It includes the means as well as the end. His purpose to lengthen out the life of Hezekiah fifteen years beyond the period of his recovery from sickness, did not render useless the common means of sustaining life. The means had the same use and efficacy as if there had been no purpose revealed, or even formed, in relation to the number of years he should live. If a divine purpose does not render useless such means as food and raiment, why should it destroy the efficacy of prayer? God had, no doubt, determined to turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness, when he conspired against the life of his sovereign; but he did not determine to do it, except in answer to the prayer of David.

Between a universal divine agency, (which is one branch of the

fourteenth Article,) and the duty of committing every thing to God in prayer, there is a very manifest agreement. Were there any single event or class of events, which either it was not possible, or not consistent for the agency of God to control, it would not be right to ask it of him in prayer. If, for example, God could not renew a man's heart, without destroying his agency, it would be unlawful to ask him to do it. Or if he could not move upon the hearts of sinners, antecedently to his effecting a radical change in them, without drawing on himself the blame which is attached to all their unregenerate doings, it would not be consistent to ask him to incline their hearts to come under the sound of the gospel, as means of effecting that change. There is a *special* agency which is exerted to renew the hearts of men. This is ascribed to the Holy Spirit, and is called God's work in a very appropriate sense; since the effect produced, is that in which he delights for its own sake. There is also a common divine agency, which extends to all creatures and things, and by which God is said to turn the hearts of kings, (impious as well as pious,) and the hearts of all men at his pleasure. And unless we believe in this common and universal agency, as well as in that which is special, our belief does not lay a foundation broad enough to sustain all that supplication and thanksgiving which the scriptures require of us. Prayer seems to assume the ground, that God is an agent who is *now* at work; that he operates as efficiently now, in sustaining, controlling, and directing all the works of his hands, as he did during the six days of creation, in giving them their existence, form, and arrangement.

If there is no discord between the duty of prayer and the doctrine of divine purposes, it will hardly be pretended that it disagrees with any other of our doctrines. This duty clearly harmonizes with all the other Articles of the experimental system, as well as with those five which have already been instanced. The other Articles of experience relate to hope, humility, a hunger and thirst after righteousness, a spirit of forgiveness, a spirit of self-denial, thankfulness, and holy meditation. These need only to be named, to discover their entire harmony with the worship of God. He who has that hope of heaven which arises from the love of God shed abroad in the heart; who is clothed with humility, hungers and thirsts after righteousness, cherishes a forgiving spirit towards his enemies, denies himself, is thankful to God the Supreme Benefactor, and meditates in his law day and night, is, by such inward affections, prepared both to pray and praise.

#### REMARKS.

The remarks with which I shall close this Article, will be comprised in two addresses, designed to enforce the duty of prayer.

1. I address myself to **CHRISTIANS**—not the mere members of the church, but the spiritual *members of Christ*. You constitute but a small part of the inhabitants of the earth; a small part of Christendom; and it is to be feared, the minority of Christian churches. Yet, in the moral conflict in our world, you alone constitute "God's host;" while all the rest of the race form an opposing army. The controversy is

founded on the claims of Christ to universal dominion. The side you have chosen, (and O how great the mercy which led you to make such a choice!) is the side which is approved by all holy beings, and which the Spirit of Truth has foretold shall be victorious. "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful." "The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever." Rev. xvii. 14. Dan. vii. 18. Christians! remember that great things are to be effected by your instrumentality. It is under *your feet* that the God of peace will shortly bruise Satan, that fallen spirit who heads the opposition. Rom. xvi. 20. The saints of the Most High are *to take*, as well as possess, the kingdom; and in the decisive battle in which the Lamb shall overcome, he is to be followed by a valiant band, even such as are "*called, and chosen, and faithful.*"

As Christian warriors, you are furnished with many weapons which are mighty, through God, to pull down the strong holds of the enemy; but none is more effectual than *prayer*. It is a weapon peculiar to yourselves: not an individual of all the opposition, can use it. It is the weapon by which Israel of old gained the victory. But for the hand lifted up to God in heaven, Israel had been discomfited, and Amalek had prevailed. Ex. xvii. Their *prayer* took hold on divine strength, and brought the Mighty One of Jacob to their help. The millenium, the thousand years of the Redeemer's reign, is drawing near; but it can never be introduced until the spirit of prayer shall be greatly increased. Before the earth can be made to bring forth in one day, or a nation be born at once, Zion must travail in agonizing prayer. Isa. lxvi. 8. The God of Zion has taken the mercy-seat, and is now waiting to receive the petitions of his people. He has himself commanded us to be importunate in presenting them: "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." Isa. lxii. 6, 7.

Prayer is a peculiarly precious exercise, since it brings us near to God, and keeps alive a sense of our dependence. It is the nature of prayer to feel its dependence on God for all things, even for its own existence: you will therefore not forget to pray that you may be *prayerful*. Cherish in your hearts the spirit of devotion. Multiply your *ejaculatory* petitions, so that the meditation of your heart may be truly acceptable in God's sight. Prize the *closet*. Rise early, or sit up late; or do both, to increase closet devotions. Redeem time from business and recreations, from unprofitable reading and conversation, to gain it for prayer. Let your *family worship* become more spiritual. Frequent *prayer meetings*, if health and circumstances will permit, and seek for the Divine presence to give life to the prayers, and interest to the whole exercise. Let the *Lord's day* be to you, more than ever, a day of devotion; and let the *Lord's house* become, in a more emphatic sense, "the house of prayer." Fill up every vacant moment, after you have entered the sanctuary, with silent petitions for the blessing of God on its holy exercises.

Let prayer accompany every thing you undertake; and engage



in nothing on which you dare not implore God's blessing. Pray that Christ's church on earth may become more pure and spiritual—that its discipline may be effectual—that it may be preserved from the deadening influence of erroneous doctrines and immoral practices—that its ministers may be qualified to discharge the duties of their sacred office—and that its light, shed on the surrounding world, may prove the means of converting multitudes to God.

Let there be much prayer for *revivals of religion*; and that they may be the genuine work of the Holy Spirit. Before the latter day glory of the church shall arrive, there must be such a measure of divine influence shed down on gospel lands, as will altogether surpass anything which has yet been experienced. And to prepare the way for this ineffable blessing, there must be such a holy fervor, such a sweet union, and such an unbroken hold in prayer, as we have never yet known. Let us neither expect nor desire it in any other way. The conversion of Christendom itself, would seem to call for all this prayerfulness: and yet a world of unbelieving Jews, Mahometans, and Pagans, all need our most fervent intercession. Brethren, let us be up and doing. Every thing within our power let us do, to establish the reign of the Prince of Peace. Let those who have money, give freely and liberally; and to their pecuniary offerings let them add their prayers. Let those who have qualifications, go into the field of labor, and bear the heat and burden of the day; and let them add much prayer to their toilsome labors. And if there be any, among all those whom God has laid under everlasting obligation by the redemption of their souls, who can neither become laborers themselves, nor furnish money—let such do what they can: let them give a holy example, and contribute liberally of their PRAYERS.

2. I would now address myself to the *unregenerate*. I can not address you as fellow Christians, but as brethren of the stock of Adam, I take an interest in your welfare. As an ambassador for Christ, I beseech you to bow your necks to his yoke, and bow your knees before the throne of grace. Those of your brethren who are now on the side of Christ, were once, in common with you, rebellious against God, and neglectful of prayer. These things we most heartily condemn in ourselves,—and why should we not condemn them in you? In that contest which exists in the moral system, the side which you have hitherto espoused, is wrong. Your submission to the Prince of Peace, and deliverance from an eternity of sin and misery, is what we ardently desire. By all the tender ties of that common nature which subsists between us, we beseech you to join the company of them who call on the name of the Lord, and to take a part with us in spreading the conquests of Immanuel. It is wicked, exceedingly wicked, for you to refuse to call on the name of the Lord. Your dependence on God is the same as ours; and your obligation to pray is the same. Do not excuse yourselves from the duty, by saying, the Lord will not hear our prayers. You well know on what condition he will hear you. To those of your character, he addresses this invitation: "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near;" and then adds, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy

upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." If you will break your league with the prince of darkness, and turn from your transgressions, your petitions at the throne of grace will not be rejected. Be entreated to enter upon a life of prayer ; and let this be the very hour when you shall commence.

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## ARTICLE II.

IT IS THE IMPERIOUS DUTY OF ALL WHO CAN HAVE ACCESS TO THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, TO MAKE THEMSELVES WELL ACQUAINTED WITH THEIR CONTENTS.

THIS duty can not be questioned by any who truly believe in the inspiration of the scriptures. But where the duty itself is not questioned, its importance is by no means suitably appreciated ; as is evident from the great inattention to revealed truth, which every where prevails throughout Christendom. To increase a sense of our obligation to make ourselves more thoroughly acquainted with the contents of the holy scriptures, suffer me to suggest such considerations as these :

1. It appears to have been the grand object of the Creator, in giving reason to a portion of his creatures, to render them capable of becoming acquainted with himself. True, this attribute of man is useful and necessary for very many subordinate purposes ; but its noblest and most legitimate use is, to enable us to acquaint ourselves with the existence, perfections, and will of our Maker. The brutes, with nothing but mere instinct, are seen to herd together ; and by instinct they are capable of providing for their animal wants and gratifications : but their destitution of reason entirely disqualifies them for that nobler pursuit for which we were created, namely, to acquire a knowledge of God.

2. As it is the design of God, in giving reason to a portion of his creatures, to render them susceptible of divine knowledge, so it is the end of all his works, to furnish them with means for acquiring that knowledge. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work : day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge of God." God does nothing for the purpose of manifesting his glory to himself ; for he has as perfect a knowledge of his own glory, without, as with, its manifestation. Nor does he do anything for the purpose of making himself known to the inanimate, or to the irrational part of the animate creation. He could therefore have no object in making an exhibition of his glory, were it not for those intelligent creatures whom he has endowed with capacities for contemplating it.

3. God has made no other manifestation of his glory to the children of men, equal to that which is made in his word : if, therefore, we are bound to ponder upon any of the exhibitions of his character and glory, then are we imperiously bound to study and ponder upon that pre-eminent exhibition of himself, which he has made in the scriptures. In the 147th Psalm, after common displays of divine wisdom and power have been mentioned, this is spoken of as a great and peculiar favor ; “ He sheweth *his word* unto Jacob, his statutes and judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation : and as for his judgments, they have not known them.” The revelation which is made in the *works* of God, is comparatively obscure ; as every thing concerning the being, attributes, and will of God, is to be learned by inference ; but in his *word*, all is intelligible and explicit. A father, standing in the midst of his children, can not more plainly deliver to them his commands, and tell them what they must do to please him, than has been done by our heavenly Father in his holy word. The whole volume of creation has never done half as much to make us acquainted with the infinite God, as has been done by the volume of inspiration ; a volume which, in the compass of a few days, can be read from beginning to end. “ Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.” Ps. cxxxviii. 2. Can any one believe that the Bible contains an explicit revelation of the will of God, and not feel obliged to make himself acquainted with its contents ? How could children manifest a more complete disregard of their father, and of his authority, than by refusing to read, or hear, or in any other way become acquainted with, the contents of a letter which he had written them, and which, as they had been assured, contained very important directions relative to the management of their affairs, and to the regulation of their conduct, during his absence from home ?

4. The duty of making ourselves acquainted with the word of God, is not merely inferred from the circumstance that such a revelation of his will is given us—it is explicitly required in the revelation itself. Christ said, “ Search the scriptures.” Paul, guided by the Spirit, said, “ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” And Peter said, “ We have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place.” A good man is described as one who meditates in the law of the Lord, day and night ; while concerning the wicked man it is said, “ He turneth away his ear from hearing the law.” Prov. xxviii. 9. “ And they shall turn away their ears from the truth.” 2 Tim. iv. 4.

5. If it is the duty of *any* to make themselves acquainted with the revelation of God’s will in the scriptures, it is the duty of *all*. The author of the scriptures is our common Creator, and the Judge of all the earth. The revelation he has given us, contains a communication of his will to the whole family of man. “ Unto you, O *men*, do I call, and my voice is to the sons of men.” It embraces all nations and classes of men ; according to the address which we find in the beginning of the 49th Psalm : “ Hear this, all ye people ; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world ; both low and high, rich and poor, together.” God has the same right to command the attention of the high as of the low, of the rich as of the poor. They are equally dependent



and accountable. Before him all human greatness disappears ; for “all nations before him are as nothing.” We are all equally interested in knowing what God’s word has revealed concerning his character and our own—concerning his designs of mercy, and the terms on which the forgiveness of sin may be obtained. The duty stated in this Article is so plain, that no more needs to be said to establish it. But it is important that some directions should be given respecting the manner of its performance. In what ways are we to make ourselves acquainted with the word of God ?

1st. By *reading* it. “Blessed is he that readeth.” In this way the Ethiopian eunuch was seeking to acquaint himself with the scriptures, at the time when Philip fell in company with him. Reading was probably the thing Christ had particularly in view, when he told his hearers to search the scriptures. It was in this way the Jews at Berea searched the scriptures, after they had heard Paul’s sermons. Every man not absolutely an idiot, is capable of learning to read. And it is every one’s duty to acquire this art, even if it be for the mere sake of enabling him to peruse the word of God. It is also obligatory on every individual who can read, to possess a copy of the scriptures, and to consult it every day. The kindred arts of paper-making and printing, have so reduced the price of Bibles, that the poor, as well as the rich, can afford to own a copy. Is it not rational to suppose, that He who teacheth man knowledge, made him acquainted with these useful arts, not so much for the promotion of human science, as for the sake of making his revealed will more easy of acquisition ? There can be no doubt in the mind of the believer, that the Bible has done, and will do, more good than all other books taken together : for it is that law of the Lord that is perfect, converting the soul. Ps. xix. 7. The man who neglects to read the word of God, neglects one of the plainest duties in the world. He neglects that duty which is designed to make him acquainted with all his other duties : for the word of God is a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path. Ps. cxix. 105.

2dly. If, among those who are convinced that the Bible contains a revelation of God’s will, there be some who can not read it, they are under solemn obligation to seek opportunities of hearing it read by others, until they shall be able to peruse it themselves. Should there be no members of their own family capable of performing this office, it is their duty to go abroad to enjoy this privilege. Is it not manifestly a matter of sufficient importance, to make it proper to take all this pains ? And where any number of families are contiguous, the members of which are unable to read, it would be highly proper to employ some one to frequently visit them, for the express purpose of reading to them the word of God. If a family, destitute of learning, should receive a written communication from a distance, which they imagined must contain an account of a rich legacy being left them, or some other interesting intelligence, would they long remain ignorant of its contents, because they did not know how to read it themselves ? Would they rest until they had found some one who could read it to them ? Such a written communication is in the hands of all those who have a copy of the word of God.

3dly. Hearing the preached word, is one proper means of seeking

an acquaintance with revealed truth. The preacher is not to be heard as an *oracle*. He claims for his testimony no respect, any further than it can be seen to agree with the written word, which alone is the true oracle of God. 1 Pet. iv. 11. Some may say, what advantage then can be derived from preaching, when the written word is that which is ultimately to be relied on? The answer is plain—preaching is of use to make us better acquainted with the written word. “Understandest thou what thou readest?” said Philip to the eunuch. “How can I, except some man should guide me?” was the answer. Unaided by Philip, it might have been impracticable for him, at least for a long time, to have ascertained who was that meek sufferer, (of whom the prophet spake,) who resembled a lamb that is dumb before his shearer. But by the help of the living teacher, the words of the prophet were soon made intelligible; and this prepared the way for him to believe, with all his heart, in the suffering Redeemer. The Jews at Berea derived great advantage from the ministry of Paul, notwithstanding they made it a point (as it became them) to receive nothing he preached, until they discovered its agreement with the scriptures.

It is perfectly consonant to reason to suppose, that the ministry of the word should be the means of improving our minds in divine knowledge. Well-furnished teachers are of great use in facilitating the acquisition of knowledge, in all the arts and sciences, and indeed in every thing which needs to be learned. Let the minister of the word obey this injunction of the apostle; “Meditate upon these things: give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all,” and his constant and attentive hearers can scarcely help but grow in that knowledge, which, in interest and utility, surpasses all other kinds.

But we are not left to the mere decisions of reason, on so important a point of duty. The word of God claims a hearing for its authorized ministers. Their commission is, to preach the gospel to every creature; consequently, it must be the duty of every creature to hear them preach the gospel. Every man who has the sense of hearing, is required to put himself under this joyful sound. It was in view of the preached word that the Savior said, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” All consistent believers in divine revelation, must acknowledge the gospel ministry to be a permanent office, without which the special ordinances of the church could not be lawfully administered. But the *preaching of the word* is represented by Paul as being by far the most important duty attached to the office. See 1 Cor. i. 17. Those ministers of the word who were appointed by Christ himself, could not continue, by reason of death; but they did not leave the church until they had ordained their successors: and these in their turn were required to do the same. In accordance with this, we hear Paul giving this charge to Timothy: “The things which thou hast heard of me, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” Their being able to *teach*, is mentioned as an indispensable qualification; and hence the inference, that it was a corresponding duty of their fellow men to *be taught*—to hear the preached word, and to derive instruction therefrom. The existence of the written word, furnishes no more reason why there should not be teachers of religion, than the existence of text books in grammar,

mathematics, and philosophy, furnishes a reason why there should be no living teachers in those branches of science. The inspired volume is an infallible text book, from which the ministers of Christ are to derive all the rich materials for their interesting work : and it also constitutes the criterion, by which their hearers are to judge of the correctness of all they teach on the subject of religion.

"Are we bound," it may be asked, "to hear all who claim to be the ministers of Christ?" Certainly we are not. We are to take heed *what*, as well as *how* we hear. The divine teacher warned us to beware of false prophets. "Cease, my son," said the wise man, "from the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge." But how shall the people know what teachers they may safely hear? After the Savior had cautioned us to beware of false prophets, whom he compared to wolves in sheep's clothing, he informs us that we shall know them by their fruits. The doctrine they bring ; the spirit they manifest ; the influence of their public and private discourses on the interests of religion ; as also the manner of their coming into the ministerial office, are all to be taken into the account. The greater sin may lie at the door of the false teacher, but his hearers are not innocent ; for did they truly love the word of God, they would be disgusted with his perversions of it, and would refuse to listen to them. As members of civil society, we have a right to hear what teachers we please ; but as the subjects of God's moral government, all men are under obligation to hear *His* ministers, even such as will boldly declare his truth, and not cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before them. Not that they are bound to turn away from the humble, faithful, devoted servant of Christ, who preaches all the essentials of the gospel, merely because he differs from them in some particulars of minor importance.

Another way of making ourselves acquainted with the revealed will of God, is to avail ourselves of Bible class instruction. The instruction which is communicated in the Bible class, in the Sabbath school, and in other catechetical meetings, is exceedingly well calculated to increase the knowledge of divine truth. It is incumbent on children and youth to avail themselves of these helps, as well as of parental and ministerial instruction, to become better acquainted with that book which is designed to make them wise unto salvation. Were a desire for a thorough acquaintance with the scriptures, to become as intense and general as it ought to be, should we not have Bible classes composed of persons of all ages?\*

*Mutual discourse* on the scriptures, is another excellent means of augmenting our stock of scriptural knowledge. After the apostle had said, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," he adds, "Admon-

\* Attention to this kind of instruction, there is reason to hope, is continually increasing. I have a letter now before me, from a minister in the northern part of the United States, giving some particulars concerning a revival that took place among his people, during the year 1829 ; and an animating view of the popularity of Bible class instruction in his congregation. He writes, "The revival has greatly enlarged our Sabbath school and Bible class. They were large, for our town, before ; but at that juncture, the converts, and a multitude of others, poured into those departments. All ages, from *eighty* years down to small children, came forward and united. So that almost all who attend my meeting, sit down, during the intermission, to learn the Bible, by which the Holy Ghost works when he saves the soul. When our Sabbath school classes and Bible classes, all sit down together in one body to learn the Bible, they look like the host of God."



ishing one another," &c. It seems to be expected of those who fear the Lord, whatever be their standing in the church, that they will "speak often one to another." Mal. iii. 16. And surely, if they converse as becomes those who truly fear the Lord, they can not fail to make his holy word the subject of frequent and spiritual discourse. "The lips of the righteous feed many." They feed each other. A free conference on revealed truth, whether in meetings convened for this object, or in occasional interviews, is well calculated to promote mutual improvement, and to render more definite our views both of doctrines and duties.

It would seem, from their practice, as though some looked upon the Bible, in very much the same light that pagans do upon an amulet, or charm, which contains certain mysterious characters, of the meaning of which the possessor remains ignorant; his dependence for aid being placed, not on a knowledge of their significancy, but on keeping the thing they are written on fastened to his body, or in some other appointed place. If this were a proper illustration of the manner in which divine truth exerts its influence, it would be enough to know that we have a copy of the Bible, though we rarely, if ever, look into it; and that we live in a place where there is a minister, though we seldom or never hear the word from his mouth. But such a notion of the efficacy of God's word, is very far from being correct. "That the soul be without knowledge, is not good." Prov. xix. 2. It is by *knowing* the truth, that we are to enjoy spiritual freedom. John viii. 32. If men are to be saved, they are to come to the knowledge of the truth: and the more thorough their knowledge of the truth, the better are they prepared to feel its influence. It is desirable, not only that the word of Christ should dwell in us, but that it should dwell in us *richly*. We are required, not merely to read, but to *search* the scriptures; even as men search for treasures which are hid in the earth. Prov. ii. 4. No part of the sacred volume ought to be left unexplored. Nor ought any man to content himself with a single perusal (even if it be a thorough one) of a book, concerning which it is said, that it is all given by inspiration, and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. Every one is under obligation to make himself so familiar with it, as to understand its doctrines, and to perceive the harmony existing between them; also, to discern the nature and harmony (both with each other, and with the doctrines and precepts) of those holy affections of heart which it inculcates; and to know what are the precepts of this holy book, in relation to the duties we owe to God, our fellow men, and ourselves.

Do any ask, why is the acquisition of scriptural knowledge ranked among the duties of *godliness*? I answer; the book which we are required to become acquainted with, is God's own word, and is designed to make him known to us. It may in a sense be said to be wholly confined to the subject of religion; for what it says concerning secular affairs, it says *religiously*. What it says about husbandry, commerce, and political concerns, is said with a view to shed the influence of religion on them all. If the subject treated of in the sacred writings, be the administration of civil government, the waging of war, or the domestic concerns of families, it is all clothed with the vesture

of religion. Therefore the acquisition of scriptural knowledge, whether by means of hearing the preached word, reading the Bible, or attending the Sabbath-school, is a duty of godliness. It has a direct tendency to lead us to think and speak of God; and is one of the best means of preparing us for his worship. That the acquisition of divine knowledge ranks with the duties of the first table, is evident, by its being made one of the most prominent services of that day which is holy to the Lord. Both Christ and his apostles, made the Sabbath a day for preaching and expounding the word: and this implied a corresponding duty on the part of the people, to make it a day for hearing the word.

Thus have we seen that the scriptures make it a duty incumbent on us all, to become well acquainted with their sacred contents. And do they take different sides on this subject? Do they any where intimate that these writings are designed exclusively for the clergy, and that it is dangerous for the laity to have free access to them? We have already seen that it would be altogether inconsistent to suppose, that the word of God could contain such contradictory precepts. And in relation to the point now before us, we are persuaded there is nothing contradictory. There is not a single sentence in all this holy book, which dissuades any man from reading, hearing, or searching it, in the most thorough manner. It reproves us for being babes in divine knowledge, when we ought to be men; and for understanding nothing but the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, when we ought to be going on to perfection. Heb. v. 12—14.

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

This Article of practice has a perfect agreement with those two Articles with which our doctrinal series commenced; not only because the scriptures make known the invisible things of God, but because they do it in a manner altogether more clear and explicit, than it has been done through any other medium. That their light is superior to the light of nature, is evident from the influence which they have exerted in dispelling the darkness of polytheism and idolatry—a darkness which the light of nature had proved insufficient even to diminish. The deist will acknowledge the propriety of studying the volume of nature, because it reveals the great First Cause of all things. But if the Bible makes this revelation more clearly, why should not *it* also be studied? And, I may add, if it was proper for the Eternal Being to give us the book of creation, to help us to the knowledge of himself, why was it not equally proper that he should give us an *inspired* book, for the same purpose? If he has given us such a book, and fixed his seal upon it, it is perfectly manifest that we are under obligation to make ourselves acquainted with it; and, in the use of all proper means, to do it without delay.

But in showing the harmony between this duty and the other parts of this work, it will not be incumbent on me to prove, that the scriptures bear testimony in favor of all our doctrinal and experimental Articles; (this has been already done;) but rather, that the whole structure of Christianity is such as to render our obligation to search the

scriptures indispensable. The inspired word is the source whence our creed is to be derived, and the standard by which it is ever to be regulated. It is also the foundation of all the religion of the heart. The word is the seed which is sown in the heart. If our heart be cleansed, it is made clean through the word which is spoken to us in the scriptures. And the whole of a correct practice consists in its conformity to the will of God, expressed in his word. Since, then, the written word is that which the Spirit makes use of to give shape, and even existence, to the whole of our religion, doctrinal, experimental, and practical, it would seem strange indeed, were it made no part of our duty (or if any, only an unimportant part) to render ourselves acquainted with that word.

With this subject in view, it is easy to see how the duty inculcated in this Article, is harmonious with the whole system of divine truth. If, in drawing up a system of theology, things should be advanced which are not according to scripture, attention to this duty will be the proper means of detecting the mistakes. On the other hand, if truth be the basis of such a system, searching the scriptures will serve to establish us in its belief.

We need only advert to the leading doctrines of our holy religion to make it evident, that the duty which we have now been considering, is one of great magnitude. Is there a God, existing from eternity to eternity; omnipresent, omniscient, and almighty; just, merciful, and true? Does the Bible contain his own description of himself—a revelation of his will to me and my fellow men; and can I doubt whether it be my duty to acquaint myself with its contents? Am I, yea, and the vast universe which I behold, the work of his hands? Are the events which I witness, none other than the orderings of his special and universal providence? And will the scriptures inform me what he designs by all these works and events? If so, what duty can be plainer or more important, than to repair to them for information? Has the Creator established a moral dominion over all his rational creatures, not excepting myself; and has he in the sacred volume promulgated the laws by which we are to be governed;—can I, believing this, for a moment question my obligation to make myself familiar with those laws? Has the word of truth described man's fallen character and condition? Then to the word of truth I must resort, to become acquainted with my own evil heart and conduct. Nor can I be innocent, should I, through inattention to the word, remain a stranger to myself. The same blessed book which makes me know my disease, reveals the remedy which, at an astonishing expense, has been provided to restore health to my soul: and is it not an imperious duty, which I owe to myself, as well as to him who died for my redemption, to let the word of Christ dwell in me richly? His word contains the invitation, which he has directed his servants to address to every lost sinner they should find; (and to me among the rest;) and shall I refuse either to read or hear this infinitely gracious invitation? Surely, no man can believe that the God of grace has sent him such an invitation, in his word and by his ministers; and yet say that he is under no obligation to read the one, or to hear the other.

What truth is revealed in the scriptures, which is not of sufficient



importance to enforce the duty we are now considering? Do they inform us that our aversion to a reconciliation to God is so obstinate, that while we are left to ourselves, we shall never accept of offered mercy? If this be true, it behooves us to know it, and that immediately. To be ignorant of this aversion, and its entireness, is dangerous indeed. The word of salvation describes, not only the merciful provision which has been made and offered us, but also that mighty grace which inclines our hearts to accept the overture they had so basely rejected. And does it not concern every sinner to understand on what he is to make his ultimate dependence for a disposition to accept the gospel offer? Is the grace of God bestowed according to his good pleasure, and the purpose which he purposed in himself before the world began;—and is our justification wholly of grace, and therefore never followed with condemnation;—and is all this grace disclosed in the word of God, without its laying us under obligation to read and hear it? Does the word also forewarn us of the end of the world, the resurrection of the dead, the general judgment, and the retributions of eternity; and yet not oblige us to acquaint ourselves with the admonitions it gives on these infinitely weighty subjects?

Between the whole of the experimental system, and this Article in the practical, there is a very close connection; since revealed truth is the grand instrument by which the Spirit begets and sustains experimental religion in the soul. In the epistle of James, we find this exhortation: “Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.” Here the word is compared to a graft, and the heart to the tree in which it is inserted. As the graft brings forth its own fruit, and not that of the tree with which it has become incorporated, so it is with that divine truth which, through the influence of the Spirit, we receive into our heart. All the holy affections which spring up in the heart of a Christian, are the product of the engrafted word. Were it to be taken out of his heart, there would be an end to those affections which make him to differ from what he was before his conversion. And how is this precious cion to be kept in its place, that its fruit may not fail, but be perpetual? It can not be done merely by having a Bible in the house, and a minister in the place. We must acquire and maintain an intimate acquaintance with the scriptures. The following are some of David’s declarations on this point: “Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.” “My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments, at all times.” “Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counselors.” “I have chosen the way of truth; thy judgments have I laid before me.” The 119th Psalm is full of experimental religion; and it all appears to be the fruit of the engrafted word.

This *second* Article of the duties of godliness, has a manifest agreement with the *practical* system; since it teaches us to make ourselves acquainted with the oracles of God, to learn from them the whole of our duty. Between this and the *first* Article of holy practice, (the only one we have as yet gone through with,) the agreement is very intimate. What a near connection exists between prayer, and searching the scriptures. The prayerful man will naturally examine God’s word in order to get acquainted with himself, and with Him who

heareth prayer. The reading and hearing of the word have great influence in reviving the spirit of prayer. This furnishes one reason for connecting the reading of the scriptures, not only with the devotions of the family, but also with those of the closet. As the man of prayer will be prompted to search the scriptures; so, on the other hand, he who searches the scriptures to learn the will of God, can not restrain prayer before him. It was the practice of the Psalmist to mingle these duties together. When he read or meditated in God's word, he prayed for divine assistance in understanding it. The language of his heart was, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." That man who feels it to be a duty to pray at all, can have no doubt that this is one of the places where it is called for. He will say, "I now have in my hand a book which I have received from God, and which treats on subjects of supreme importance, both as his glory and my own well-being are concerned. It is of unspeakable consequence that I should understand it aright; and yet I perceive by the cautions it gives, as well as by the multitude of contradictory systems which men have *professedly* derived from it, that there is much danger of my giving it a fatally erroneous interpretation. How solemn and critical is my situation!" The thought now occurs, He that gave me this book is here present; and though I see him not, he sees me, and can hear my prayers. And has he not encouraged me on this very occasion to seek his help, by saying, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally to all and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him?"

This is an occasion which will call forth prayer from all those who have learned the way to the throne of grace. If we desire to be enlightened into the will of God, we shall earnestly pray for the guidance of his Spirit. In our retired devotions, we can ask our Father in heaven how we are to understand this and that portion of his word, until we shall have prayed over every book, and chapter, and verse in the Bible. This must be both a profitable and pleasant exercise to such as delight in the scriptures, and in communion with their divine Author. In prayer, and in searching the scriptures, whether by reading them or hearing them expounded, we go to the same God for counsel. The language of both duties is, Lord, make me to know thy will, that I may do it.

#### REMARKS.

1. Since it is of supreme importance that we acquire a thorough knowledge of the revealed will of God, we have cause for gratitude that we are favored with so many facilities for its acquisition. We are favored with a correct and intelligible translation of the scriptures into our vernacular tongue; and can be furnished with a copy at a very small expense—or gratuitously, if our pecuniary circumstances will not permit us to purchase. By means of schools scattered through the land, almost the whole of our free inhabitants are taught to read. Many are taught to read in our Sabbath schools; and particularly to read the Bible. These, together with our Bible classes, make the ac-

quisition of divine knowledge more easy, especially to the young. We are also favored with the ministry of the word, beyond most Christian nations. In point of religious privileges, as well as in other respects, we have reason to say, "The lines have fallen to us in pleasant places." It is said, "Where no vision is, the people perish." But if we perish, it will not be so much for lack of vision, as through an indisposition to come to the light.

2. Does not a neglect of the duty exhibited in this Article, prove a Christian nation to be verging towards infidelity? When the Bible is excluded from schools, and seldom read in families; when parents neither read it to their children, nor teach them to read it; and when the house of God is forsaken—the way is preparing for infidelity to come in almost without resistance. In our own country, there are, it is true, very many copies of the word of God; one, at least, in almost every house. But we have reason to believe there are very many families, where the word of God is scarcely read at all, and where the parents wholly neglect instructing their children into its holy doctrines and precepts. Though houses of worship are multiplied, there is manifestly an increasing proportion of our inhabitants, who neglect sanctuary duties, and turn their ears away from a preached gospel. Do not such things as these indicate, that as a people we are retrograding, and fast sinking into a state of infidelity?

3. If it is every man's duty to seek to understand the will of his Creator, as revealed in the scriptures, it must be a heinous sin to spend one's life in seeking to misunderstand it. Yet this is a sin of which many are guilty. They wrest the scriptures; putting the most unnatural construction upon them, and making them speak a language foreign from their true meaning. The manner in which they interpret the word of God, serves to hide from their sight his holy, and their unholy character. There are many who are laboriously engaged in reading and criticising the scriptures, whose whole effort seems to be, to avoid discovering what God has revealed concerning his character and claims, and their character and obligations. They resemble those students in the book of Nature, who delight themselves in examining the works of creation, but who never "look through Nature, up to Nature's God." Though every page of this book presents them with evidences of his being, wisdom, power, and goodness, they see him not. If their philosophical research brought a God of holiness to their view, it would be a temptation to them to discontinue it; for to their minds, a God of holiness is an object of aversion. So it manifestly is, with many who study the book of revealed truth. Their object is not to find its holy Author, nor to learn his holy will. With such it often happens, that their study serves to increase their ignorance, rather than their knowledge. Because they have not received the love of the truth, they are willing to be ignorant of it; and it is the effect of their most laborious studies, to confirm them in the belief of a lie.

4. That we should all learn the revealed will of God, is a matter of such vital importance, that we can scarcely conceive of a greater calamity than a *corrupt Christian ministry*; where the men who profess to be set for the defense of the gospel, employ all their knowledge and influence to pervert it. Such men Christ denominates



“*blind leaders of the blind* ;” indicating the character, both of the teachers, and of the hearers whose attention they attract. We can not have read the scriptures with any attention without having perceived, that they represent those men who assume the sacred office of Christ’s ministers, and yet preach a gospel diverse from that which he himself preached, as the most dangerous characters. We are cautioned to avoid them as sheep would avoid wolves. The declaration that they are like wolves in *sheep’s clothing*, was intended to awaken and increase our vigilance. It is said, “the priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth.” But if his lips, instead of keeping knowledge, pour forth sentiments which are subversive of gospel truth, who can describe the danger they are in, who look to him for instruction, as “the messenger of the Lord of hosts !” Mal. ii. 7.

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### ARTICLE III.

THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE WEEKLY SABBATH IS ESSENTIAL  
TO A LIFE OF PIETY.

A RIGHT observance of his holy day, holds a prominent rank among the duties which we owe to God. In giving existence to the race of Adam, He was in infinite wisdom pleased, for the promotion of his own glory, and man’s best interests, both temporal and spiritual, to set apart one day in seven as holy time. To teach mankind by example, as it were, how much of their time was to be devoted to secular pursuits, and how much to holy rest, he occupied six days in the work of creation, (though, had it been his pleasure, he could have spoken the universe into existence instantaneously,) and rested on the seventh day. That seventh day he blessed and sanctified ; and thus, at the beginning of time, was instituted the weekly Sabbath.—When, in after ages, the Most High saw fit to give our rebellious world an epitome of the moral law, comprised in ten commandments, the one which enjoins the observance of the Sabbath, had a distinct place among them. This is one of the commands which he uttered with his own voice, from the midst of the burning mount, and which he wrote with his own finger, on the tables of stone. *Remember*, (said he to every Israelite, and indeed to every child of Adam to whom the commandment should be made known,) *remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work ; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God : in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates : for in six days the*

*Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.* It is highly important that we should understand the design of the Creator in giving us this institution. It appears to have been a subordinate design, to provide a day of rest from the fatiguing labors of this life—rest for all, whether parents or children, masters or servants; and also for those beasts which are subjected to the service of man. But the principal design of this institution was, to establish a memorial (which, by its weekly recurrence, should never be forgotten) in honor of Him who created all things, and for the promotion of godliness among men. This day is therefore called “the holy of the Lord;” and in the proper observance of it, we are said to honor Him.

From the fact that the Sabbath was instituted previous to man’s apostacy, we may infer that even in a sinless state, he would have stood in need of such a day. If he had not, by revolting from God, brought a curse upon the ground, still, some labor would have been required to provide for the wants of his animal nature. And the weekly return of a day which, like the Sabbath, should afford him repose of body, and an opportunity for closer communion with God than on ordinary days, would have greatly contributed both to his physical and spiritual enjoyment. But if sinless man needed such an institution, how much more, we who have become aliens and rebels. We require the influence of this weekly remembrancer to hold us back from downright atheism—to prevent our losing all the benefits resulting from that kingdom of grace which God has established among us. In a world circumstanced like ours, holy time is essentially requisite to the preservation of the public, if not of the private, worship of God.

The Sabbath, as the Lord has instituted it, is a cessation from all the ordinary business of life—from every thing of a secular nature in labor, study, discourse, or recreation. “In it,” says the Lord himself, “thou shalt not do any work;” that is, any which is of a secular nature. The divine favor is promised to that man who turns away his foot from the Sabbath, from doing his pleasure on God’s holy day; and who calls the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord honorable, and honors Him, not doing his own ways, nor finding his own pleasure, nor speaking his own words. Isa. lviii. 13. The Sabbath is to be a day of rest, but not of idleness. If it be kept according to the will of God, it will be a day of great spiritual activity. In the same sentence where the seventh day is said to be a Sabbath of *rest*, it is described as a *holy convocation*; that is, a day of assembling together for holy purposes. Lev. xxiii. 3. The whole day, whether spent in the sanctuary with the people of God; or at home with our families; or in solitude, is a day separated to the Lord. Him we are to worship in the sanctuary, at the family altar, and in the secret place. Of Him we are to *read, hear, speak, and think*. The day is His, and if we do not devote it to his immediate service, we are guilty of robbing God. Religion is the sole business of the *Lord’s* day.

All that is said in the scriptures on the sanctification of the Sabbath, is harmonious and consistent. The sanctification required is complete, extending to all things, and imposing obligation on all men. Our abstaining from servile labor alone, would not constitute a holy observ-

ance of the day ; for other things may stand as much opposed to such an observance, as labor. There would have been no consistency in permitting the tongue to expatiate on the very business the hands were forbidden to touch. But the commandment of God is consistent ; since it forbids us to *speak our own words*, as well as to do our own ways. Neither would there have been any consistency in prohibiting servile labor, and tolerating *amusements* : but the command as strictly forbids us to find our own pleasure, as to do our own work.

There would be no agreement between being required to rest on the Sabbath, when at home, and being allowed to pursue business when abroad ; between being forbidden to provide things for the market, and being allowed to transport them there ; or to vend them at home. In the days of the prophet Amos, even the men whose portion was in this life, viewed themselves restrained by the command of God from selling corn and setting forth wheat, until the new moon and the Sabbath were gone. Amos viii. 5. The law of the Sabbath stands as much opposed to the prosecution of *a journey* on that hallowed day, as to the labors of the field ; and as pointedly forbids going to the market, as preparing to go. Nehemiah, that eminent reformer, who was moved by the Spirit of God, frowned on such as he saw treading wine-presses on the Sabbath ; as also on those who were carrying their produce to the market : against these he testified, “in the day wherein they sold victuals.” Neh. xiii. 15—22. The Jews were required to take heed to themselves to bear no burden on the Sabbath-day, to bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem ; neither to carry forth a burden out of their houses on the Sabbath-day, neither to do any work. This injunction made it a breach of the Sabbath to enter the market on that day, or start for it, or prosecute a journey towards it ; and was evidently designed to discountenance all journeying on that day, whether on secular business, or for amusement, or to pay visits to our friends. The command allows and encourages us to travel from our own houses to the Lord’s house ; and this short distance the scripture calls “a Sabbath day’s journey.” See Jer. xvii. 21—27. Acts i. 12.

There would be a want of consistency in the law of the Sabbath, if it restricted a part of the members of society from labor and recreation, and left the remainder wholly at liberty in this respect. But it is not so : the father and the mother, the son and the daughter, the man-servant and the maid-servant, the native citizen and the stranger that is within our gates, are all under the restriction. Nor are kings, nobles, rulers, and rich men, a whit more released from a strict observance of the day, than are subjects, and the more dependent classes of society ; for the day is consecrated to the honor of Him, whose subjects we all are, and on whose providence we are all equally dependent. The *nobles* of Judah, as well as the common people, were sharply contended with by that reformer, of whom I have just spoken, for profaning the Sabbath. The profanation of the Lord’s day is very sinful in all, but it is peculiarly so in the leading men of a nation ; for it must not be supposed that they can plead ignorance of their duty ; and it is manifest that their unholy example is, in a pre-eminent degree, dishonoring to God, and prejudicial to the best interests of their fellow men.

In close connection with these remarks I proceed to observe, that



there would be an entire want of harmony between the different injunctions relating to the Sabbath, were we to suppose that the obligation to sanctify it rested upon us in our *individual*, but not in our *national* capacity. What foundation could there be for such a distinction as this? Is that complex thing, called a *nation*, any less dependent upon God, or less accountable to Him, than one of its individual members? There is a sense in which union is strength; but the union of ever so many dependent parts, does not constitute independence, nor approximate towards it. If the Lord has a right to claim respect from an individual, he has equal right to claim it from a nation. Is He not Governor among the nations? And does he not require a national, as well as individual submission to his supreme authority? If not, why does he say to a people whose ways are displeasing to him, "Shall not my soul be avenged on such a *nation* as this?" At a certain time, when the Lord sent a message to the Jews by the prophet Jeremiah, concerning their hallowing the Sabbath, he directed him to begin in this manner: "Hear ye the word of the Lord, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem." The kings were the head of the nation; as such, they were required to hallow the Sabbath-day. When national business is transacted on that sacred day which God claims as his own, it must be considered as nothing less than a *national contempt* of God himself. Such contempt would manifestly be cast on God, were the legislature of a nation to meet on the Sabbath, to debate on the political concerns of the country; or were judges to hold courts; or were any officers of government to transact their official business on this holy day.

Had the Sabbatical institution been so constructed as to allow of its suspension, during the busiest seasons of the year, it would have contained the seeds of its own destruction. Such an exception to its constant observance would have tended, not only to a forgetfulness of God and the interests of his kingdom, during that part of the year, but to an entire obliteration of the remembrance of the day: for if the Sabbath, with its appropriate duties, were once to be suspended on account of any peculiar pressure of business, it would be extremely difficult, in such a money-loving world as this, to fix on a time to remove the suspension and restore it to its hallowed place. The force of this remark is, I believe, verified by facts. Those who suspend the law of the Sabbath for a season, on the plea of the peculiar pressure of business, are apt to be very lax in their obedience to this law, through all the other parts of the year. But that all such suspensions are contrary to the will of God, is forever decided by that inspired comment on the fourth commandment which we find, Exodus xxxiv. 21; "Six days shalt thou labor, but on the seventh thou shalt rest: *in earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest.*" The command to rest in seed time and harvest, which to husbandmen are seasons of the greatest pressure of business, is the same as a requisition to observe every Sabbath in the year.

It is said by some, that on the subject of Sabbatical institutions, there is a great discordance between the religion of the Old Testament, and that of the New. This is a matter of so much importance to the cause of godliness, that it claims our special attention. We know that

there were sabbaths which were purely of a Jewish origin, and that these, with numerous other typical institutions, were done away by the coming of Christ. But the weekly Sabbath differed from these in several important particulars. 1. In the object of its institution; it being designed to commemorate an event equally interesting to the whole race of man, namely, the creation of the world. And the thing designed to be commemorated by the *Christian* Sabbath, is not less interesting to mankind at large, namely; the redemption of the world by the death of God's beloved Son. 2. The weekly Sabbath differed from all other sabbaths, in its early institution. It was instituted on the first week of time, and before the apostacy of man had made room for the existence of typical observances. 3. The weekly Sabbath was distinguished from all the others, and from all ceremonial laws, by being incorporated with the moral precepts in the decalogue and deposited in the ark of the covenant.

We are aware that some of those who profess friendship for the religion of the Bible, are of the opinion that the weekly Sabbath was abolished by Christ. If this opinion be correct, surely we ought not to rebuild what he has destroyed. But if he has not done it, it behooves us to take heed to ourselves, that we do not impute to him a thing which, in that case, his soul must abhor. If the Sabbath was abolished by Christ, the fact must be learned either from his *teaching*—or from his *example*—or from the *example* and *writings* of his *disciples*.

1st. His *teaching*. Does he any where teach us that he came to repeal the law of the Sabbath; or does he even intimate any such thing? All that he said concerning things lawful to be done on the Sabbath day, was manifestly intended to apply to the same Sabbath which was enjoined by the fourth commandment. He taught that it was lawful on the Sabbath day, to perform that servile labor which is necessarily connected with the instituted worship of God; as in the case of killing the victims which were offered under the law; that it was lawful for us to eat our meals, as on other days; to feed and water our cattle, and go to their relief when any disastrous accident had befallen them; and also to minister to the necessities of the sick and wretched among our fellow men. See Matt. xii. 1—5. Luke xiii. 15; xiv. 1—6. Mark iii. 1—5. But no one can glance at these instructions of our divine Teacher, without perceiving that he meant them to apply to the Sabbath, as it was first instituted. It is manifest that, in his view, these things constituted no breach of that Sabbath which God had all along commanded his people to sanctify, and for the profanation of which he had so often punished them. Had it been true that the Son of God was sent to abolish the Sabbath, he surely could not have been sent to find fault with its strictness, (so far as that strictness was sanctioned by divine precepts,) while it was still in force. We may therefore conclude, with great certainty, that the views which he gives us of the sanctification of the Sabbath, are in perfect accordance with those that are given throughout the Old Testament.

But the Savior, it will be said, taught us that the Sabbath was made for *man*, and not *man* for the Sabbath. And what is the inference to be drawn from this account of the design of the institution? Is it this; that since the Sabbath was made for *man*, he may do what he will

with it; that he may sanctify, or profane it, as shall best suit his convenience? If the assertion, The Sabbath was made for *man*, proves its abolition, under the Christian dispensation, it may be adduced to prove that it was annulled as soon as it was instituted; for the assertion is altogether unrestricted in its application. If it proves that we have now a right to spend the day in whatever way we please, it will prove that the Israelites had a right to do so, even at the time when they heard the voice of God saying to them, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy;" and when he told them, "Whosoever doeth work therein, shall be put to death:" for even then it was true, that the Sabbath was made for *man*. All the commandments were made for man; being equally adapted to promote his happiness, and the Creator's glory. And this will hold true of the commandment enjoining the observance of the Sabbath, as well as all the rest. But though the commandments are made for our good, it would be perverse thence to infer, that it is left at our option whether to obey or disobey them.

They who think that this assertion of Christ favors the abrogation of the Sabbath, have entirely misunderstood his meaning. They seem to imagine that he leaves it for every man to make such a Sabbath as suits himself; whereas he evidently supposes a Sabbath already made—made *for* man, but not *by* man. And must he not be understood to mean the same Sabbath, which is so fully described through all the writings of the Old Testament? What other Sabbath could he mean? This very Sabbath, he teaches us, was made to be a blessing, and not an injury to man. And thence he infers, that it was not a real breach of the commandment for the disciples to pluck a few ears of corn to satisfy their hunger; since a contrary supposition would seem to have implied, that man was made for the Sabbath, instead of its being made for him. The thing complained of in the conduct of the disciples, he justified, as being consistent with the most perfect regard to the commandment. But what a strange perversion of his word must that be, which makes them mean, that this consecrated day is now divested of its original sacredness; (the thing which constitutes the very essence of a Sabbath;) that it was *made* for man, and is therefore now *unmade*, and no longer to be regarded as a holy day! The Sabbath, to be a blessing, must cease to be a Sabbath—must cease to be what it is! Is this the logic of the Bible, or of infidelity?

The divine Teacher declared it to be lawful to do good on the Sabbath days. See Matt. xii. 12. Mark iii. 4. Luke vi. 9. This has been so construed by some, as to imply an abrogation of the fourth commandment; as though he meant to teach the lawfulness of doing, on the Sabbath day, every thing which was so useful as to render it lawful to be done on other days. If this had been his meaning, would he not have said, The distinction between holy and common time is now at an end? But nothing like this is intimated. There stood before him a man who had a withered hand; and this led him to put the question, Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? The phrase, "to do *good*," is here to be understood as designating an act of *compassionate beneficence*; such as relieving an object of distress. This is *doing good* in the more appro-



priate sense. Whatever the Savior meant by doing good on the Sabbath day, this is evident, that he meant something which had always been compatible with its correct observance ; therefore it can furnish no argument in favor of its abrogation. Nor can it furnish any argument in favor of the transaction of secular business on the Lord's day.

But why, it may be asked, did not the Savior, if he intended to perpetuate the weekly rest, give more definite and positive instruction in relation to the manner of its observance ?—as he did on other points of duty. I answer, His instructions on this point were drawn forth by the opposition which he met with from the Pharisees, who were his principal antagonists. Their error, as to the external observance of the day, did not consist in laxness, but in over-doing. They were superstitious ; disallowing things to be done, which were not forbidden by the divine command. This circumstance required that our Lord's instructions relative to the Sabbath, should be adapted to free it from such superstitious appendages as had a tendency to frustrate the design of its institution. But while this was his principal aim, he at the same time manifested an entire approbation of the institution, when divested of pharisaic impositions. Nor do we discover any intimation that it was his purpose ever to abolish it.

2dly. Let us now turn our attention to his *example*. We call on those who plead the example of Christ, in favor of the abolition of the Sabbath, to point out a single instance of his disregard of that sacred day. Luke informs us that it was the Savior's custom to go into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Luke iv. 16. This, certainly, does not savor of any disregard of the day. Nor can anything of such a nature be found in all his public or private life. Sabbath-breaking, we know, was a common charge against him, and instances of his supposed desecration of the day were specified. And how did he meet these charges ? Did he deny the facts alledged ? He did not. Did he deny the obligation to keep holy the Sabbath, as enjoined in the command ? He did not. His most vigilant enemies did not pretend to find in his practice any breach of the Sabbath, except in the cases of his healing the sick on that day. But these he pronounced to be no breaches, but acts that were consistent with its original, unabated sanctity. Therefore the example of Christ furnishes no argument against its perpetuity.

In justifying himself for taking the Sabbath to heal the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, "Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work ;" that is, on Sabbaths as well as on other days. But no candid person will interpret his words as an assertion, that he performed secular work, such as was forbidden in the fourth commandment. He is called the carpenter, as well as the carpenter's son. Mark vi. 3. Does any one suppose that he claimed a right to pursue that business on the holy day ? His meaning was, that in his divine capacity, he carried on the work of providence on all days, not excepting the Sabbath ; and that as a part of this divine work, he had restored health to the impotent man.

He who was born of a woman, was made under the law. As the ceremonial law was still in force, if the observance of the Sabbath be reckoned one of its requirements, he could not have fulfilled all right.

eousness without submitting to it. Whether, therefore, the Sabbath be considered as enjoined by the moral, or by the ceremonial law, we can not infer its abrogation from the example of the Savior, without fixing a blot on his character.

3dly. It remains that we inquire concerning the *example* and *writings* of Christ's *disciples*, in relation to the point in question. If the abrogation of the Sabbath can not be learned from these, it must still be in full force; for with the apostles the spirit of inspiration ceased, and no one has since their day had a right to add to, or take away from, the words of the inspired book.

The *example* of Christ's disciples, so far as it is made known by the scriptures, goes to show that the weekly Sabbath is not abolished. Their plucking corn on that day to satisfy their hunger, (for which they were reproached by the Pharisees,) is no proof that their example countenances either a repeal or an abatement of the law of the Sabbath; since their Divine Master justified the act, as being consistent with a due sanctification of the day. And beside this case, I do not recollect that the scriptures furnish any other, where the twelve disciples were accused of sabbath profanation. The practice of Christ's other followers, in relation to this matter, may, I think, be learned from what is said of certain holy women, who had been much with him, and had become familiarly acquainted with his precepts and his practice. Of these it is said, "They followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid; and they returned and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath day, according to the commandment." Luke xxiii. 55, 56. Does this look as though a strict observance of the Sabbath, was found only among the self-righteous Pharisees? or as if the followers of Christ had been taught, either by precept or example, lightly to esteem the day?

It is evident, that after Christ's ascension to heaven, his followers had a practice of meeting weekly, for worship and religious instruction; and also that a particular day of the week was specially devoted to this object. When they met by themselves, as Christian churches, their regular time of meeting seems to have been the first day of the week. This is the day which John calls "the Lord's day," and during which he "was in the Spirit." Rev. i. 10. Paul was at Troas seven days, and yet it was on the first, and not the seventh day of the week, that the disciples came together to break bread, and to hear him preach the word. Acts xx. 6, 7. That this had become the regular Sabbath to the whole church of Christ, may be inferred from 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2; "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." From this passage we may infer, that there was a uniformity among the churches of Christ, as to the time of their assembling—that they came together regularly on the first day of each week.

They who believe that the Sabbath is abolished, may say, You have now surrendered to us the argument, by acknowledging that the Christian Church observed a different day from the one which was enjoined on the Church of Israel. But how can this be called an abolition of

the Sabbath? We still have a day of rest from labor—a day devoted to the worship of God and the duties of religion; and it returns with the same frequency as before. The change was anticipated and foretold, when, in the 118th psalm, David said, “This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.” This day, even the day when the stone which was rejected by the builders, became the head stone of the corner; or, in other words, when the Redeemer was declared to be the Son of God, with power, by his resurrection from the dead:—“This is the day the Lord hath made, He calls the hours his own.” There is no want of harmony between the two Testaments, in relation to the Sabbath. They both have a weekly Sabbath—a day set apart for the same holy purposes, to be regulated by the same rules, and observed in honor of the same infinite God, who is both the Creator and Redeemer of the world.

They who assert that the law enjoining the observance of the Sabbath is repealed, or at least so far abated as to be no longer absolutely binding, think they are supported in their assertion by the apostolic writings. The following passages in the epistles of Paul, are chiefly relied on for this purpose: “One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.” Rom. xiv. 5. “Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.” Gal. iv. 10, 11. “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.” Col. ii. 16, 17. I will first state what seem to be the leading sentiments contained in these passages; and then suggest some reasons why they ought not to be so construed, as to make them militate against the perpetuity of the Sabbath.

From these passages we learn, 1. That under the law, there were various holy days, or seasons, which were designed to continue in force until the setting up of the Christian dispensation, and no longer; and that consequently, when the apostle wrote his epistles, these consecrated seasons had become divested of their peculiar sacredness, and were in fact reduced to the place of common time. 2. That this matter was so understood by some of the Christian converts, but not by all of them. 3. That while the apostle was desirous to have those who thus differed in opinion, exercise mutual forbearance, he nevertheless considered it an unfavorable symptom that gentile converts, who had not been educated in the observance of the ceremonial law and the Jewish sabbaths, should manifest a great attachment to these vacated rites. As these converts had, unaided by types, been made acquainted with that Savior whom types only shadowed forth, he wondered they should be so attracted with what he considered to be but weak and beggarly elements. This was one thing which increased his fears concerning the Galatians.

I will now suggest some reasons why these passages ought not to be understood as implying an annihilation of the weekly Sabbath.

(1.) They are capable (as we have, in part, already seen) of being differently understood, without destroying their force. If, in what he thus wrote, the apostle be considered as referring solely to those Jew.



ish ordinances which were merely of a ceremonial nature, all difficulty at once vanishes. And who that reads attentively, can doubt that he did refer to these, and these only? In close connection with the passage in Colossians he says, "Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to *ordinances*?" In this passage, we can not understand him to have any reference to baptism and the Lord's supper, or to any New Testament ordinance. It would be a perversion of his meaning to apply it in this manner; (though the words themselves would admit of such an application;) for it was not concerning New, but Old Testament ordinances, that he was discoursing. So when he wrote respecting days and seasons which were esteemed holy, he had reference to those only, about which a dispute existed between the Judaizers on the one part, and such as came fully into the spirit of the Christian dispensation, on the other. The latter observed the first day of the week; but the former were not satisfied with doing this, or with others who did no more than this:—they would have the seventh day also regarded, and all other times which were made holy by the Jewish laws. It is perfectly natural that we should understand the apostle as speaking of these disputed days, when he said, "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike."

(2.) The entire difference which the scripture makes between the weekly rest, and all other sabbatical institutions,—in its being appointed before the fall, when no types were needed, and when the whole race were comprehended in one family,—its being in memory of an event equally interesting to all people,—and its incorporation into the moral law;—furnishes a strong reason for believing, that the apostle did not mean to confound it with those holy times which were of Jewish origin.

(3.) If the apostles had designed to teach us that the Sabbath was abolished, they would never have paid such deference as they did, to the first day of the week. They might have been driven by the prejudices of the Jews and of weak believers, to pay attention to the holy seasons which were observed under the law; but this could furnish no reason for their fixing on a new day for their holy convocations. When the apostle tells the Galatians he is afraid of them, because they observed days, and months, and times, and years, it is not consistent to believe, that he intended to condemn the observance of the first day of the week as a Christian sabbath; for he informs the Corinthians, that he had given orders to the churches of Galatia, as he had to them, to make their collections for the saints on the first day of the week. Did he not, by such an order, sanction their regularly assembling on that day? And was not this, in effect, teaching them to observe a holy day? But it was not teaching them to observe days which had been divested of their holiness. The observance of a weekly rest by the Christian church, and that on a different day from the one which had before been observed, furnishes a satisfactory proof, that it is to be in force as long as the church of Christ shall remain on the earth. The proof of the permanency of the institution, is much greater than if there had been no change of the day.

(4.) The grand object of the epistle to the Hebrews, is to reconcile

the Old and New Testament dispensations. In the fourth chapter, the writer is employed in showing the harmony between the Old and New Testament rests—between the rest of Canaan, and that of heaven—between the rest of the weekly Sabbath, observed by the church militant, and the eternal sabbatism of the church triumphant. And in doing this, he seems to have found it in his way to tell us how it happened, that the Christian church should keep a different day from that which had been kept before the advent; namely, because on this day Christ ceased from his work, as God did from his, when the creation of the world was completed. The 4th verse of the chapter reads thus: “For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day, on this wise; And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.” We know the consequence of this rest was, that he instituted a sabbath in commemoration of the work from which he rested. After passing over four verses, while the same subject is still in view, we read; “There remaineth therefore a rest (in the Greek, a *sabbatism*) to the people of God. For he that has entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.” These passages being compared, present to our view God the Creator and God the Redeemer, as ceasing from their respective works, and by this means, giving existence to a sabbatism; the former of which, we are told, was the *seventh* day; and it is implied that the other rest was on a different day, namely, the day on which the Redeemer ceased from his work.

(5.) That it was not the design of the gospel dispensation to destroy a weekly Sabbath, may fairly be inferred from the incidental mention which the apostle John makes of one day of the week, as distinguished from all the others. Speaking of an extraordinary manifestation which was made to him, he says, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day.” Here one day of the week is distinguished from the others, both by its name, and by a memorable occurrence which took place upon it. By the distinctive name, “the *Lord’s day*,” we are taught, both what day of the week is intended, and what is the specific character of the day. As the *Lord’s body* means Christ’s body—the Lord’s death, Christ’s death—the Lord’s table and supper, Christ’s table and supper; so the Lord’s *day* is the same as Christ’s day; and denotes that day on which he arose from the dead. This, we know, was the first day of the week; and from the commencement of the Christian era, it has borne the appellation of *the Lord’s day*. Its name designates the specific character of this signalized day. It implies, that there is a peculiar sense in which the Lord calls the hours of this day his own. See Isa. lviii. 13. And by inference it implies, that we are under obligation to consecrate these hours to his immediate service. The declaration of the apostle, that he was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, naturally leads us to contemplate it as a day which the Lord delighteth to honor, and to which he has transferred both the *sanctity* and the *blessing* of the seventh day Sabbath.

(6.) That the observance of the weekly Sabbath has never been laid aside by the Christian church, is a good reason for believing that it was not the design of the apostolic writings to declare the institution abrogated. The new moons, the passover, the jubilee, and indeed all consecrated times which were of a Jewish origin, were either not ob-

served at all by the gentile church, or were soon discontinued. But the weekly Sabbath has been retained through every period, down to the present time. It has been vastly profaned, we know; but this profanation has always been considered as the fruit of declension in the purity and power of religion. It is not known that any denomination have proscribed the weekly Sabbath, or taught that its observance was dangerous to the interests of religion. But if, through the medium of what Paul wrote on this subject, Christ had intended to abolish, not only those holy days and seasons which were peculiar to the Jewish dispensation, but also the weekly Sabbath, is it not strange that, during eighteen hundred years, he has not led his people to discontinue its observance, as they have the observance of the passover, and other Jewish solemnities?

Finally. It is a potent reason why we should construe the passages in question, (provided it can be done without wresting them,) so as not to imply an abolishing the weekly Sabbath; that its abolition would have been highly injurious, not to say destructive, to the progress of the gospel. The Sabbath is so essential, that we can hardly see how the cause of religion can be upheld and advanced without it. Were the children of God deprived of the help which it affords them, to grow in knowledge, and grace, and preparation for their eternal rest, they would consider the privation to be among the greatest of calamities. They can scarcely imagine anything that would be more prejudicial to their best interests. And to such as are yet held in the bond of iniquity, the abolition of the Sabbath would be a still greater calamity. They need the duties and influences of this hallowed day, as means of arresting their attention to their spiritual concerns, and effecting their escape from the wrath to come. Experience has shown the force of this remark; for wherever the Sabbath is so prostrated, that its sacredness and its appropriate exercises are not known, there the strong man armed holds an undisturbed dominion over the minds of the children of men.

The importance of having one consecrated day in the week, is, in effect, acknowledged by all denominations of the Christian church; since they are all in the practice of holding religious meetings with this frequency. Let those who assert that God has not transferred the holiness of the seventh to the first day, but that he has abolished the Sabbath, tell us how they justify their own practice of statedly meeting, for religious purposes, on the first day of the week. If the apostle, by his remarks, meant to inculcate the abrogation of the weekly Sabbath along with the rest, would he not address these persons as he did the Galatians, and tell them that, because they observed days, he was afraid of them? Perhaps they will say that, though they do not consider the first day of the week as holy time, yet they have no objection to having a day for rest and worship, provided its observance be not considered as obligatory, on account of its being enjoined in the fourth commandment. What scripture precept, then, shall we have to direct us how to spend this day of rest? Or shall it be under the control of no law? Ought we to esteem it an advantage, to have our day of religious rest divested of all rules for its proper observance? While the sabbatical institutions peculiar to the Jews, remained in



force, it was a privilege to them, as well as needful for the honor of God, that these institutions should be accompanied with divine directions for their right observance. Had God revoked the precepts which guided them in their observance of the passover and other feasts, and still required them to retain the feasts themselves, they would, like the *holydays* of Christendom, have proved a real injury to the cause of religion. If we still have a weekly rest, the observance of which is sanctioned by such high authority as apostolic example, it must be of great importance to the interests of religion, that we have directions from God how to keep such a day: for without such directions, this leisure day might prove a serious impediment to the very cause it was designed to advance. Without such directions, we should be without any proper means of rescuing it from abuse.

Now we need just such a rule as the fourth commandment, to teach us how we may so keep the Sabbath as to bring glory to God, and profit to ourselves. And it is wholly unaccountable that the apostles, in apprising us of a change in the day for religious worship, gave no particular directions how to observe it, unless we suppose them to have viewed the fourth commandment as fully applicable to the first day of the week; in which case, no directions were necessary. The Christian church needed only to be informed which was the day to be kept; —with respect to the manner of keeping it, they had elsewhere received instruction. Various precepts in the Old Testament, and especially the fourth commandment, had made them well acquainted with the nature of holy time, and with its appropriate exercises. The Old Testament Sabbath the Lord called *his* day, and therefore required it to be devoted to his immediate service. See Isa. lviii. 13. If, then, the New Testament Sabbath is “the *Lord’s* day,” it is a fair inference that it is, in like manner, to be devoted exclusively to *his* service.

Enough, I trust, has been said to convince every reader, that the Sabbath is both a divine and a highly important institution; and that the scriptures of both Testaments unite their testimony in favor of its perpetuity, and of our obligation to its strict observance.

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

The duty of sanctifying the Sabbath, fully accords with the *two* which we have already considered, namely, the duty of worshiping God, and that of seeking an acquaintance with his holy word. The Sabbath affords us great advantages for the performance of both these duties; and its annihilation would prove exceedingly detrimental (if not ruinous) to the worship of God, and to the acquisition of divine knowledge. There is a harmony between the Lord’s having a day of his own, and his having a book of his own. And is there not reason to expect, that they who now take a stand against his *day*, will in the end be found in opposition to his *word*?

Between the duty enjoined in the fourth commandment, and the great truths which we are required to believe, there is an entire congruity. How evidently does this duty agree with the *first three* Articles of our doctrinal series. If there be an infinite Being, who, for his

own glory, made all things, and orders all events ; and if we are not only the workmanship of his hands, but the subjects of his moral government—not only dependent on him for all we enjoy, but accountable to him for all we do ; then are we bound by every consideration both of interest and duty, to love him supremely and obey him implicitly. For us, and for rational creatures every where, godliness is not only becoming but indispensable. Without it, we can neither enjoy the displays of God's glory, nor become the voluntary instruments of promoting it—can neither be happy ourselves, nor, in any proper sense, make our fellow creatures happy. Now if godliness is so indispensable to our becoming the objects of God's complacency, and enjoying his favor both here and hereafter, would he not provide us with the most powerful and efficient means for its promotion ? And what better means, in our view, could he have provided, than that which is afforded us in the weekly Sabbath ? Let us briefly consider two ways in which this institution tends to promote godliness.

1. It promotes it, by reminding us of God, and of the important relation subsisting between him and ourselves. Nothing is more certain, than that godliness can not be maintained where God is not remembered. “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that *forget God*.” Ps. ix. 17. In a world like ours, where so much secular business must be transacted, and toilsome labor performed, and where we are liable to be absorbed with numerous and harassing cares, there is great danger that God and eternal things will find no place in our thoughts. But the weekly recurrence of a day consecrated to the immediate service of God, is calculated to prevent so undesirable a result. During one day of each week, we are reminded that there is a supreme Being, whose creatures we are, and on whom we are dependent for all that we possess or hope for, both in time and eternity. And the transfer of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week, reminds us of the infinite love which God has manifested to our guilty world, in giving his only begotten Son to die for our redemption.

2. The Sabbath is remarkably adapted to promote godliness, because the appropriate exercises of the day are wholly of a religious nature, and because those secular pursuits which are not in themselves sinful, and which we are even under obligation to follow on other days, are strictly forbidden on this. Not only are we required to abstain from worldly business, but even from worldly conversation and thoughts. Our discourse is to be spiritual, and our contemplations are to be fastened on heavenly things. Who can not see that a day thus kept, must contribute very much to the promotion of godliness.

Methinks every one who will turn his attention to the subject, will perceive a manifest agreement between the institution of the Sabbath, and our first three doctrinal Articles. They who truly keep the Sabbath, do by this act declare, that they believe there is a God—that he is the Creator of the world—and that his will is law to his creatures. Their cheerful obedience to the fourth commandment, when the breach of it would not expose them to punishment from their fellow men, or even to their reproach, furnishes a greater evidence of subjection to the supreme Lawgiver, than does their obedience to those commands,

the breach of which will awake against them the sword of civil justice. The commandment which requires the sanctification of the Sabbath, is put in the midst of the precepts of the moral law, and is well calculated to give force to all the rest ; and a disregard to this, has a manifest tendency to benumb our sense of obligation-with respect to the law in general. And if civil magistrates knew how much an obedience to this divine injunction did towards forming good members of society, as guardians of the public morals, and as enemies of crime, they would, by their own example, reverence the Sabbath, and studiously avoid every enactment which should be calculated to bring it into contempt among their fellow citizens.

The *fourth* doctrinal Article relates to man's apostacy from God. There is no want of agreement between such a doctrine, and the duty which I am now urging ; unless it can be shown, that our apostacy from God has released us from obligation to acknowledge him as the Creator and Governor of the world. Man's apostacy from God, however, suggests the only reason why the very existence of a Sabbath, has been forgotten in so great a part of the world, even where the original division of time into weeks is still remembered ; and also why many, who are reminded of the original institution by an explicit revelation from God, do not unite in its sanctification.

The *fifth* Article of the doctrinal series, relates to the atonement made for sin by the death of Christ. The Sabbath, transferred as it now is to that day of the week on which, by his resurrection, the Savior completed the work of redemption, is well adapted to render the doctrine contained in that Article, precious to our souls. The creation of new heavens and a new earth, has, in a sense, caused the former heavens and earth to be forgotten. Isa. lxy. 17.

The *sixth* Article shows, that in view of the atonement, a free offer of salvation is made to every man. Ministers of reconciliation are appointed to tender this offer, by publicly preaching the gospel. And in harmony with this, they are furnished with a day for the regular exercise of their ministry. They are required to preach the word *in season*, and out of season. The Sabbath is the time they chiefly depend on, to unfold the terms of salvation, and beseech their fellow men to be reconciled unto God. It is the day for blowing the gospel trumpet.

Passing over the intermediate Articles of the first division, I come to the *last but one*, namely, that which brings into view, among other things, the eternal rewards of the righteous in heaven. There is a very observable agreement between such a belief, and such a duty as the sanctification of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is designed as an extraordinary season of preparation for heaven, and also as a striking emblem of that holy rest. The Sabbath is a resting from the business of this world for one day : in heaven, there is a perpetual cessation from all such business. It is a day devoted to the immediate service of God ; and in heaven, God will be worshiped without intermission. They who believe there is a heaven of entire devotedness to God, and whose hearts rejoice in this belief, can not feel indifferent towards the day which the Lord has sanctified.

There is a harmony between the sanctification of the Sabbath, and



the religion of the heart. *Benevolence* embraces the glory of God, and the good of the whole world ; and by the light of revelation, they who possess this affection can see, that the sanctification of the Sabbath is intimately connected with the glory of God and the good of men. *Complacency*, considered as one of the fruits of the Spirit, has pleasure in holiness, and calls the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord honorable. Its holy services are attractive to holy minds.—*Reconciliation* to God will not refuse to submit to the law of the Sabbath. *Repentance, faith, hope, and humility*, all accord with the duty of sanctifying the Sabbath. It is a day which eminently favors their exercise, and fosters their growth. A *thirst* after *righteousness*, or a desire for a growth in grace, is included in the experience of all such as are born of the Spirit ; and to all such, the holy day must be “the queen of days.” *Self-denying feelings* help constitute the religion of the heart, and self-denying actions, the religion of the life. In the spirit of self-denial, we shall be willing to keep the Sabbath in earing time and in harvest. We shall be willing to suspend a journey on which we may have entered, rather than dishonor God, grieve the hearts of his friends, and give countenance to his enemies. *Thankfulness* has place in every regenerated heart. And will not thankfulness very naturally manifest itself, in a strict and conscientious observance of the Lord’s day ; since its observance is an acknowledgment, that we are indebted to him for all the blessings of creation, and for the still greater blessings of redemption ?

It has been shown that experimental religion is truth in the heart, and that it has a direct tendency to lead us into conformity to the truth, in our external conduct. Now if keeping holy the Sabbath is one branch of practical truth, (as I trust it has been shown to be,) then all those experimental feelings which are genuine, will have a tendency to prepare us thus to keep it. When God has once made known to us his holy Sabbath, we do not walk in the truth, unless we regard it : and without regarding it, we can not give scriptural evidence that the truth is in us.

#### REMARKS.

1. A conscientious and strict regard to this part of practical religion, furnishes one good evidence of godly sincerity. That a proper observance of the holy Sabbath, constitutes no unimportant article in the obedience even of the gentile church, may be learned from a prediction in the prophecy of Isaiah : “Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant.” Again ; “From one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord.” A man’s refraining from external violations of the sixth, seventh, and eighth commands of the decalogue, does not, at the present day, furnish as much evidence of his regard to divine authority, as is afforded by his refraining from breaches of the fourth command ; for these last expose him neither to fine, imprisonment, nor disgrace. One may, however, manifest much external regard to the Sabbath, and yet

have no piety. If, while he avoids *some* breaches of the Sabbath, he allows himself in others, there is reason to fear that he does not at all regard the day to the Lord. But he who refrains from secular business of every kind; that which can be done in secret, as well as that which is open; also from amusements, and from conversing or reading on secular topics; who does not even allow his thoughts to be occupied with such concerns; who not only refrains from these violations of the Sabbath, but performs all its appropriate duties, consecrating it, from beginning to end, to the immediate service of God; and who at the same time has unfeigned *delight* in a Sabbath thus kept:—such a man has reason to hope that he has taken hold of God's covenant.

2. In view of the influence exerted by the Sabbath, in preserving the knowledge of God, and a sense of obligation to him as our Creator and Redeemer, it is not strange that infidelity should strive hard for its obliteration. Those French infidels whose avowed object was to crush the religion of Christ, devised a plan well adapted to accomplish their object, when they procured the enactment of a law to substitute weeks of ten, for weeks of seven days. They who think all religion to be priestcraft, and that our world would do much better without, than with it, must, of course, wish the Lord's day to be either forgotten, or divested of its hallowed character. So long, therefore, as there are those among us, who prefer atheism to the worship of God, or the religion of nature to that of revelation, we must expect to see the claims of the Sabbath meet with violent opposition. If any of the members of Christ's church take part against the Sabbath, by disregarding its injunctions, or speaking lightly of its strict observance, they are doing much to prolong the reign of the prince of darkness. He is doubtless gratified in having that church, whose destruction he is seeking, filled with members who greatly pollute the Sabbath, and who speak contemptuously of such as are conscientious in its observance.

3. In view of this part of practical religion, we discover one way in which the nations of Christendom, in distinction from those of the pagan world, can manifest their impiety and disregard to divine authority. By means of the inspired writings which they have in their hands, they know that the Creator has reserved one day in the week, to be consecrated to his immediate service. If they refuse thus to consecrate this day, they practically deny his supreme authority. They seem to say, Who is the Lord, that he should claim from us one seventh part of our time? Our time is our own: who is Lord over us?—Among the sins peculiar to Christian nations, Sabbath profanation is one of the most common and flagrant. There are extensive portions of the Christian world, where the Sabbath is chiefly distinguished as a day of revelry and vain mirth. Could the nations of Christendom take a proper view of this sin, and weigh it in the balance of the sanctuary, they would tremble for fear of the righteous judgments of Heaven.

4. In view of the intimate relation that a proper observance of the Sabbath has to the honor of God, the advancement of his cause, and the best good of the nation, there is, at the present period, scarcely

any other evil, which appears so affecting to the Christian patriot, as the growing profanation of this consecrated day. He perceives that, in the eyes of the public, it is fast losing that hallowed character, with which the divine command has invested it; that it is becoming more and more a day both for business and amusement; and especially that its profanation by traveling, is rapidly increasing. How is he pained to learn, that on all our internal waters, whether rivers or canals, no distinction is known between holy and common time—between the day the Lord has given us for His worship, and those he has given us for doing our own work. There is scarcely a Sabbath when he can repair to the sanctuary, without being disturbed by “the noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots.” He notices that vehicles of all descriptions, for the transportation of persons and property, are suffered to pass without check or reproof: and, what to him is a very painful circumstance, he perceives that this way of desecrating holy time, is sanctioned by that law of the land which authorizes the public mail to be transported on this day; thus giving countenance to all that stage-traveling by which the Sabbath is greatly polluted. Whatever apology the statesman may make in justification of Sabbath mails, the Christian, with his Bible open before him, can view them in no other light than that of A NATIONAL PROFANATION OF THE LORD’S DAY. That man, whose hopes concerning his country’s prosperity, rise or fall, according as he views her ways to be pleasing or displeasing to God, can not look upon all this wilful disregard of the law of the Sabbath, without deep emotions. Often does he sigh out a wish, that some Nehemiah might be raised up, with sufficient wisdom and courage to contend with all classes of society, not excepting the rulers of the land, to bring them back to that strict and exemplary observance of the Lord’s day, which characterized our puritan forefathers.

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#### ARTICLE IV.

IT IS INCUMBENT ON ALL THE REAL FRIENDS OF GOD TO MAKE AN OPEN AVOWAL OF THEIR FRIENDSHIP, BY JOINING THEMSELVES TO HIS VISIBLE CHURCH, AND SUBMITTING TO ITS DISCIPLINE.

To give a clear view of the duty which is here inculcated, I shall show, I. That God has a visible church on the earth; II. That it is incumbent on all his friends to attach themselves to it by an open profession—to observe its divinely appointed institutions, and submit to its discipline, to the end of life; and, III. That this ranks among the duties of the first table of the law.

I. God has a visible church on the earth. By the *visible* church,



is meant that religious community, or divine commonwealth, which is an object of vision and of public observation. *The church*, in the most restricted sense of the word, is composed of those only who are sanctified. This is the "church of the first born, who are written in heaven;" who are not only within the visible kingdom of God, but have the kingdom of God within them; and who are so joined unto the Lord Jesus Christ, as to be one spirit with him. The names and number of these hidden ones, are known only to the Searcher of hearts: but the church, considered as a visible kingdom, is known to men. The number and names of its members can be precisely ascertained. Since some imagine, that God never designed his church should have any other visibility than what is produced by the good works of his people; and hence conclude, that an explicit profession of religion constitutes no part of Christian duty; I shall proceed to show, that it is manifestly the will of God that his church should have a visible form, capable of being recognized by the inhabitants of the earth.

1. The *visible* form of the church is proved by those representations which make it consist of two sorts of members, perfectly unlike in their character. The kingdom of heaven, which is one name for the church, is compared to "a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind; which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away." The same thing is illustrated by the parable of the ten virgins; all of whom made the same profession, and entertained hopes of future blessedness; and yet were so radically different, that while half of them were called wise, the other half were called foolish. If the church comprehended none but the truly pious, then, even in the most degenerate times, its members would all be of one character.

2. The visible form of the church is made evident, by the authority it has received to admit and *exclude* its own members. The church at Jerusalem, from time to time received certain definite numbers into its communion. It is also evident that this, and all the other churches of Christ, were authorized to cast out, as well as to admit members. There is an explicit command of Christ, confirmed by apostolic injunctions, to cast out and disown the unworthy members of his church. This would be without meaning, if, by the church, no visible community had been intended. On such a supposition, the work of admitting and excluding would belong to God alone: and we know that he never excludes any whom, through grace, he has once brought in.

3. That the church is a visible kingdom, may be learned from the explicitness with which men are spoken of as professing their membership in it. Under the Old Testament, they *vouched* the Lord to be their God. They did not consider it enough to have his covenant in their heart; they also "took it in their mouth." They stood before the Lord, even their whole congregation, to enter into covenant with the Lord their God, and into his oath. This public covenanting was repeated by the church, then called "the congregation of the Lord," time after time; by which solemn transaction, their successive generations subscribed with their own hand unto the Lord. Under the New Testament, there is the same evidence of the church's visibility:

they who believed, *named* the name of Christ, and *confessed him before men*. Paul reminded Timothy that he had *professed a good profession before many witnesses*; and in the same epistle, he speaks of good women as *professing* godliness. He also exhorts the Hebrew converts to hold fast the *profession* of their faith.

4. There are divinely appointed ordinances which are peculiar to the church; and this proves it to be a visible community. Ever since the days of Abraham, there has been an external seal of the righteousness of faith. This seal was appointed to be the distinguishing badge of the church. The passover, and some other feasts which were enjoined under the typical dispensation, were to be observed by none besides the commonwealth of Israel, and those strangers who became incorporated with them, not as a civil, but as an *ecclesiastical community*. The typical feasts have all ceased; but the Lord's supper, which is commemorative of the death of Christ, is to be observed in the church until his second coming. These positive institutions could never have been observed, had not a visible form been given to the household of faith.

Christ also enjoined on his church an *ecclesiastical government*, peculiar to itself. Since the means by which this government is maintained, are wholly of the moral kind, they cause no interference with any of the other governments under which Christians live. As a kingdom of truth and righteousness, the church is required to govern itself. Christ has made it the duty of every member who is grieved with the heresy, or the unchristian conduct of his brother, to tell him his fault in private, and endeavor to reclaim him—if unsuccessful, to take with him one or two others, that they may unitedly strive to bring the offending brother to repentance—if still unsuccessful, to bring the matter before the church:—and if the offender “neglect to hear the church,” he is to be “as a heathen man and a publican.” See Matt. xviii. 15—17. It is made the duty of the church, not only to excommunicate, but to note, such an incorrigible member, and have no company with him; that, if possible, he may be ashamed, repent, and return to his duty. 2 Thess. iii. 14. 1 Cor. v. 5—11. Now if the church of Christ were not a known body of men, capable of being distinguished from others, how could a complaint be brought before them or how could their decision be had on the case?

II. The existence of a visible church being proved, I proceed to show that it is the incumbent duty of all the friends of God, to seek to attach themselves to it, and to observe its ordinances, submit to its discipline, and adhere to its holy interests, through life. There is a sense, an important sense, in which all men are under obligation to come into the church of Christ. This is the standard which the Lord hath pitched. It is the kingdom of reconciliation, set up in this world of rebellion. If man's apostacy from his Creator was wrong, it is clearly the duty of the whole race to renounce allegiance to the god of this world, and return to him from whom they have revolted. The long continuance of our revolt, has not changed its nature and made it right. The God of heaven, whose character is immutably the same, is still our Creator and rightful Sovereign: as soon, therefore, as we know that he has set up a kingdom among men, the design of which is to

subvert that of the prince of darkness, it is incumbent on us to give it the most cordial welcome. We ought all, without exception, and without delay, to turn from the power of Satan unto God ; and to make this manifest, by separating ourselves from the subjects of the one, and joining ourselves to those of the other.

No change of heart is necessary, to bring us under *obligation* to take the side of Christ against the devil, and the side of the church against its enemies. But the obligation to *profess* friendship to Christ, supposes that the obligation to exercise it, has been already complied with. To make a profession is something more than an acknowledgment that we are under obligation to love God ; it is declaring that we do love him ; or, at least, that such is the hope we entertain of ourselves. Duties of all classes, both religious and secular, and duties enjoined on all men, whether good or bad, are required to be performed in the same holy manner ; but there are many duties enjoined, where no *evidence* of the goodness of our heart, is made a pre-requisite to their performance. The sinner, as well as the saint, is required to pray ; and to pray with a holy heart ; but he is not to wait for evidence that his heart is holy, before he engages in this duty. In making a profession of religion, however, it is quite otherwise ; for the church is manifestly designed, as to its professing and acting members, (and the plan of this work will lead me to pass, in silence, every thing in relation to infant-membership,) to be composed of the real friends of the Redeemer. Such its members are required to be ; such they profess to be ; and when any of them cease to give evidence of the sincerity of their love, they are spoken of as hypocrites—as persons unworthy of a place in the church of God. “Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth ?” If it is intended there should be a visible distinction between the two moral kingdoms in our world, those who make a *profession* of attachment to the kingdom of Christ, ought to be such as have a *real* attachment to it. Hence it is, that when one who has made this profession, so conducts himself as to destroy its creditableness, he is said to be delivered to Satan ; that is, he is put back into that visible kingdom whence he came out, and to which, from his present conduct, he is supposed to actually belong.

The question may now be asked, whether it be a duty binding on *all* the friends of God, to become the subjects of his visible kingdom ? If not on all, on what portion of them, I ask, does this duty devolve ? The scriptures do not tell us of any individual believers, or class of believers, who are to be excused from its performance. Neither wealth, nor rank, nor talents, nor education—nothing, in short, but holiness of character, and no given *degree* even of that—is spoken of as a necessary qualification for membership in the church. All who give evidence of being baptized by one spirit, are prepared to be united in this one body. These are solemnly bound to openly espouse that cause which they have already embraced in their hearts. Under the former dispensation, the Israelites were required to *avouch* the Lord for their God ; and such of the gentiles as became believers in Israel’s God, were required to manifest it by submitting to Israel’s peculiar



laws and ordinances. Ex. xii. 48. And the New Testament enjoins, not only subjection to the laws of the Christian church, but a *professed* subjection. Christ requires his friends to confess him before men. And with this agree the words of the apostle: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Matt. x. 32. Rom. x. 9.

That covenant of grace which is proffered to lost men, is accompanied with an external seal; and their reception of the covenant is to be attested by their receiving its seal. Abraham was required to believe; and then to receive the sign of circumcision as a seal of his faith; Isaac was required to exercise the same faith, and cordially to assent to that seal which, as a child of promise, he had already received. Under the present dispensation, something more is required than repentance and faith. To the question, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter returned this answer; "Repent, and *be baptized every one of you*, in the name of Jesus Christ." Acts ii. 38. Christ required of his disciples, that by faith they should eat his flesh and drink his blood: but he also required them to eat the sacramental bread and wine which showed forth his death. All his friends, from the time of the institution of the supper unto the end of the world, are required to do this in remembrance of him. Luke xxii. 19. But this they can not do, without attaching themselves to his visible family. Nor can they, without this, maintain that watch over each other, and that regular discipline, which he has prescribed.

The church is said to be "the pillar and ground of the truth." 1 Tim. iii. 15. To preserve and promote divine truth in doctrine, experience, and practice, was the grand design of its being set up. How reasonable then must it be, that those who believe the truth—who have received it into their hearts, and are resolved to conform to it in their lives, should seek for a place in the church. We should suppose that all such persons would assuredly do this:—unless prevented either by a want of confidence in their own piety, and a fear that their joining the church would injure the cause of religion;\* or by their residing in a place where there is no church—or if any, none that they could conscientiously join. We can not think, however, that those who have been converted and become as little children, will be prevented from confessing Christ before men, because they can find no company of his followers with whom they can bring their feelings to unite. True converts desire to see the visible church answer more completely to its character as *the light of the world*. They are too candid to reject its claims to be that light, because it is not, like its divine Head, light unmixed with darkness. They are taught by the word of God itself, to expect to see the church less perfect than it ought to be; because, first, it is described as embracing in its com-

\* An eminently pious woman once told me of a trial she had, in connection with her entrance on a Christian profession. On the day appointed for her examination, preparatory to an admission into the church, she was sorely tempted to keep back, through fear that, should she be admitted, she might dishonor her profession. But the thought occurred, that should she be left to do so, Christ had, in the discipline of the church, provided a way for her ejection from it: and this encouraged her to present herself for examination, and to venture on a profession.

munion men who love not the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity ; and, secondly, because the love even of its best and purest members, is spoken of as imperfect. But with all its imperfection, it is such a kingdom as has not its like on the earth. In comparison to all others, it is "the perfection of beauty." Ps. l. 2. It has had in it, during the successive ages of the world, holy men and holy women, whose character has essentially differed from that of their fellows of the fallen race. Imperfect as Zion is, the Lord "hath desired it for his habitation ;" and will not his friends desire it for their habitation ? Yes, for their *habitation*—their permanent abode ? They will join themselves to the Lord and to his people, in a *perpetual* covenant. Jer. l. 5. They will submit to the laws of Christ and to the discipline of his church, not as a temporary, but as a permanent engagement. He who becomes weary of performing the duties of a subject of the visible kingdom of Christ, has reason to conclude that he has no love to Christ himself.

III. An open profession of religion, it will now be shown, ranks among the duties of *godliness*. This is not a duty which grows out of our civil or domestic relations, but rather from our immediate relation to *God*. The church is a spiritual, and not a worldly interest. *My kingdom*, said Christ, *is not of this world*. John xviii. 36. This, in a sense which is true of no other kingdom, has been set up by God himself. It is called "the kingdom of God"—"the city of God"—"the congregation of the Lord"—"the church of God"—and "the church of Christ." By attaching ourselves to it, we make an open declaration of our belief in the inspiration of the scriptures, and of our full determination to make them the rule of our faith and practice. We declare ourselves to be on God's side, in the controversy which he has with an apostate world ; and we virtually say to our fellow sinners, "We have all been wrong, totally wrong, in rebelling against God, and in refusing to return to him whom we have hated without cause." The covenant we enter into is with God himself, and with his friends, considered as fellow subjects of his spiritual kingdom. This covenant we seal, by being baptized with water in the name of the triune God. The sacramental supper, which from time to time we celebrate, is a holy ordinance, designed to be a touching memento of that love which was stronger than death, and to illustrate and promote the communion of saints.

From this view of the subject, it is easy to see why our making a profession of godliness, has been ranked among the duties which we owe more directly to God himself. They who make a profession of godliness, put their light on a candlestick, and if they live answerably to that profession, God will receive the glory of it to his own name.

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

There is entire concord between this, and the other *practical* Articles which have been considered. Its agreement with the one which immediately precedes it, is quite apparent. In that, we found the Lord had set apart a day, which should be emphatically *his* day—in

this, we see that he has separated a people, to be emphatically *his* people ; his design, in both instances, being to keep up a remembrance of himself, in a world which is so prone to forget God. And whatever other people may think of the Lord's day, we might reasonably expect that his own people would all unite in keeping it holy. They who are truly the Lord's *people*, will cheerfully observe the Lord's *day* ; and they who are willing he should have a day, will be willing he should have a people.

The agreement is no less apparent between this, and the *first* and *second* Articles. The command which requires us to worship God, and that which requires attention to the instructions of his word, are harmonious : and these agree with that which enjoins an open profession of godliness, accompanied with the observance of special ordinances. There would be no agreement between a public profession, and the neglect of the private duties of religion. It would be the leaven of the Pharisees. What a contradiction between attending on sacraments, and at the same time neglecting the worship of the family, and of the closet : or between declaring ourselves to be the friends of God, and being at the same time inattentive to his word. To be prayerful, to be studious in the scriptures, to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, and to solemnly enter into covenant with God and his people, are duties which fully harmonize. Put them together, each in its proper place, and they constitute a life of godliness ; but if one of them be left out, there is a manifest defect.

There is a harmony between the duty of professing godliness, and all the parts of *experimental* religion. It is the inward experience of the power of the gospel, which prepares the way for making a consistent profession ; and every grace of the Holy Spirit helps prepare us for, and incline us to, the performance of this duty. That spirit of benevolence, which was mentioned as the *first* particular, and indeed the sum of all inward religion, will prompt us to it ; for if we love our fellow men, we shall desire, above all things, to see them become the followers of Christ : but we are not advantageously situated to promote their conversion, until, by an open profession, we have taken our stand on his side.

The *second* Article in the experimental series, is complacency in all holy characters. With this, agrees the practice now under consideration. In the early history of the Christian church, it is related concerning some, who, for a time, had been forcibly separated and kept from their brethren, that "being let go, they went unto their own company." The same union with holy characters, must have always tended to produce the same effect. "Entreat me not to leave thee," said a converted Moabitess to a mother in Israel, "or to return from following after thee : for whither thou goest, I will go ; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge : thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

Let any one possess that reconciliation and submission to God, which the *third* experimental Article supposes every convert to possess, and he will naturally be led to connect himself with the church of Christ ; which is none other than a kingdom of reconciliation, set up in a world of rebellion. If we have the spirit of reconciliation, we shall natu-



rally resort to the standard of the Captain of salvation. Here, all those who have laid down their arms of rebellion, ought to embody themselves, that they may unitedly testify in favor of submission to God, and make a combined attack on the kingdom of Satan.

Repentance for sin, (the subject of the *fourth* Article of experience,) will lead to a change of conduct, and, as a natural consequence, to a change of companions. The true penitent will forsake the foolish, and live, and go in the way of understanding. When sin becomes lothesome, sinners will not be his chosen companions.

How naturally will *faith in Christ* lead us to confess him before men. It will lead us to espouse his cause, and, if called to it in providence, to speak of his testimonies before kings, and not be ashamed. It is faith, blended with *self-denial*, that emboldens the convert to enter into solemn covenant with God and his people—yea, to do any and every thing which the honor of God requires, let it cost what it may; even should it make our foes to be them of our own household.

Some, peradventure, may think that *humility* would forbid one's publicly saying, (what those who make a profession, do virtually say,) "I am a Christian." But if it is a divine requirement that we not only love Christ, but confess him before men, then humility will not oppose such an open avowal. That woman who, in the presence of many, washed the feet of the Savior with her tears, made a very open profession of her love; and yet she is not complained of for the want of humility. We may walk humbly with God, and at the same time be bold and zealous in espousing and advocating his cause. We may have a *hope* in Christ, and be ready to give an answer to every man who asks a reason for it; and yet do it with meekness and fear.

The duty we are now considering, is in harmony with our *doctrinal* Articles. The *first* of those Articles acquaints us with the existence and perfections of God; and the *second*, presents him to us as the Creator and Upholder of the universe, giving existence to things and events for the manifestation of his goodness. If this infinite Being has, for such a purpose, set up a visible kingdom among the apostate children of Adam, will not those who love him declare his glory, by becoming the subjects of this kingdom?

The *third* of those Articles relates to the moral government which God established over his intelligent creatures; the *fourth*, to that rebellion by which man broke away from under it; the *fifth* and *sixth*, to the provision made for his return, and the free offer of pardon which is grounded upon it; the *seventh*, to the disposition universally manifested, to reject that offer; and the *eighth*, to that great and merciful revolution in the mind of the rebel, by which his feelings towards God's government, man's revolt, and the work of redemption, are entirely changed. Let these doctrines be viewed in connection with each other, and we can not but see how proper it is there should be a standard erected among men, to which they who have become reconciled to God through the mediation of his Son, should repair. By regeneration, they have passed from death unto life; and they act in accordance with such a change, when they go from the world to the church, and are "written with the living." They have accepted the invitation to the marriage supper; let them therefore be found among the

guests at the king's table. The existence of a visible church, and the duty devolving on all God's friends to connect themselves with it, accord with divine sovereignty and election, as they are exhibited in the *ninth* and *tenth* Articles. These doctrines, full of distinguishing mercy, are illustrated in the existence of the church, which is described as "a garden enclosed," that is, separated from the field of the world. The visible elect are not always the same as the real elect; and yet the existence of an elect church illustrates the doctrine of an election of grace. And as far as any have evidence that they belong to the election of grace, so far have they reason for the conclusion, that it is their duty to belong to the visible elect. An open profession of religion accords with the *eleventh* Article, namely, justification through the atonement; since such a profession is a practical declaration, that we have renounced the righteousness of the law for the righteousness of faith.

They, who in the sincerity of their hearts come into the church, give themselves up to God in an *everlasting* covenant, and engage never to turn back, but to walk with him and his people all the days of their life. In accordance with these engagements on their part, we learn from the *twelfth* Article of the doctrinal series, that the Lord engages to be their God forever, and to give them a sufficiency of grace to enable them to endure unto the end. It is only in dependence on the grace revealed by that doctrine, that the most spiritual convert dares to profess the religion of Christ, and make an engagement to adhere to it as long as he shall live.

The *thirteenth* Article relates to the resurrection of the just and of the unjust, the general judgment, and the separation which is then to be made between the righteous and the wicked, by their being placed on the right and left hand of the Judge, and receiving an irreversible sentence according to their respective characters. It is in accordance with this Article of our belief, that we see in the *present* world two moral interests of an opposite character. And as it is unsuitable that those who are hereafter to be placed among the enemies of God, should here claim a place among his friends; so, on the other hand, it is unsuitable that those who are hereafter to reign with Christ in glory, should in the present world continue in the kingdom of the enemy. They who are prepared for the kingdom of God in its heavenly state, are most certainly prepared for membership in the church below.

#### REMARKS.

1. The *visibility* of the Christian church, suggests a reason why its members should be circumspect. Their membership gives them superior advantages for either honoring or dishonoring the great Head of the church. In connection with his telling his disciples that they were the salt of the earth, and the light of the world, he made this pertinent remark: "A city that is set on a hill, can not be hid." This was as much as to tell them, that if they had the savor of piety, it would be perceived, and if they emitted light, it would be seen. The

members of Christ's church need not pray that they may be like a city that is set on a hill: they are so, and can not avoid it, short of destroying their membership. By their profession, their use of covenant seals, attendance on special ordinances, and exercising the government of Christ's spiritual kingdom, they assume in the religious world a place of great conspicuity. A city that is set on a hill, will be seen, whether it be beautiful or deformed, flourishing or going to decay. So will it be with the church. And this furnishes a powerful argument, why every one who nameth the name of Christ, should depart from iniquity. We who have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. Our neighbors have seen us sitting with him at his table. And now let them meet one of us where they will, they are ready to say, "Did not I see thee in the garden" (or at the table) "with him?" If, in business or visits, we mingle with the unprofessing world, still we are distinguished by our profession; and all eyes may be turned towards us, to see whether we manifest a different spirit from the men who have their portion in this life—whether we, who profess more than others, actually do more than others.

2. The existence of such a community as the church, serves to test and distinguish characters. Times have been, when a public profession of godliness has been attended with such a hazard of property, reputation, and even life, as to furnish a good degree of evidence that all had been forsaken for Christ. But it has not always been thus hazardous. There are times when, so far from being odious, it is even popular, to make a profession of religion; and men are tempted to put on the livery of Christ from mere secular motives. But there is no time, when a man's behavior in the church does not serve to determine his character. If he makes a good and faithful brother, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, and seeking the peace and prosperity of the church, the evidence of his being a real Christian is greatly increased. But they who content themselves with enlisting under the Captain of salvation, without fighting the fight of faith—with entering on the Christian race, without pressing toward the mark—who seek their own, and not the things which are Jesus Christ's—and who take no interest in the concerns of his church;—give more decisive evidence of a graceless state than sinners in general.

The church's being a visible, organized society, affords its enemies a fair opportunity to manifest their hatred. This gives it tangibility, and exposes it to be rudely assailed by a malignant world. Nathan informed David, that his sin had given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord, to blaspheme. There are some who are ever harping upon the sins of professors. The scripture acknowledges the sinful defects of the church: but these blasphemers seem anxious to make it out, that Christians are not only imperfect, but absolutely the worst of men. They eagerly watch for the halting of believers; and, from the unchristian conduct of individuals, they take occasion to cast reproach upon the whole church. While some professors of religion are hypocrites, all of them are imperfect: and hence wicked men infer, that such a thing as vital piety has no existence. "See," say they, "how those church members conduct: what better are they than the rest of



the world?" Were not the church of God an organized body, this particular display of human wickedness could not be made.

3. We notice a striking analogy between the imperfection of the visible church as a body, and the imperfection which exists in every saint. In the Song of Solomon, the spouse is heard to say, "I am black but comely." She did not mean that her blackness was comely; but that she was comely, notwithstanding her blackness. All are not Israel that are of Israel; but there are those who are Israelites indeed. As there are two opposite classes of members in the church, so there are two conflicting principles in the heart of every Christian. The graces of the Spirit and the lustings of the flesh, dwell in the same heart. But in both cases, this mixed state of things is coming to a close. In heaven, the church will retain but one class of its members. When the Bridegroom shall come, the wise virgins, with their lamps well trimmed and replenished with oil, will go in with him to the marriage; but the foolish virgins will all be excluded. So it will be with the individual Christian. In heaven, he will retain all those precious graces of the Spirit, with which his soul was beautified on earth; but those lustings of the flesh which grieved the Spirit, and made work for repentance, will all be gone. In that same blessed world where the church, freed from the cumbrance of her carnal members, will retain none but such as are spiritual, every saint will appear with all the graces of the Spirit, unalloyed with any of the corruptions of nature.

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## ARTICLE V.

TO CONSECRATE A PORTION OF OUR SUBSTANCE TO HIS SERVICE,  
HOLDS NO UNIMPORTANT RANK AMONG THE DUTIES WHICH WE OWE  
TO GOD.

In discussing this subject, I propose, I. To define the duty it exhibits, and give my reasons for classing it with those of the first table: II. Show its beneficial influence: III. The importance of observing some system in its performance: and IV. The extent of its obligation.

I. It is incumbent on me to show what is intended by the consecration of a portion of our substance to the Lord, and why it is classed among the duties which we owe more immediately to God. This division may be subdivided into three parts. We need,

1. To form some definite idea, as to what is meant by *the consecration of earthly substance to the Lord*. When we speak of obligation to consecrate a *portion* of our substance to the Lord, let it not be thought to imply a right to consider even the *remainder* as strictly and absolutely our own; or a right to consecrate any part of that remainder to

the god of this world, or to the gratification of our own unhallowed desires. Satan has no claim on our property ; and we are forbidden to make any provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof. The devoting of one day in the week to the immediate service of God, by no means supposes us at liberty to employ the other days in sinning against him. On the contrary, consecrating a part of our time directly to him, is an acknowledgment that all our time is his, and, of course, that none of it should be employed in dishonoring him. The same is true with respect to the consecration of a part of our substance.

That part of our substance is consecrated to God, which is *separated from secular to sacred use* ; being directly devoted to the maintaining and extending of that spiritual kingdom which God has established among men ; and including voluntary contributions for the support of the poor, to whom he has, in a special sense, condescended to become a Patron. The property used for secular purposes, such as providing temporal comforts for ourselves and families, and furnishing funds for the support of civil government, is not, in scripture dialect, *consecrated to the Lord*. The gold and silver, the brass and other materials, which were used in making a tabernacle to accommodate the worship of the church in the wilderness, are denominated “an offering to the Lord.” It was given immediately to him. In the same light, David considered the property which he and his people set apart for the building a temple for God : “Of thine own,” said the devout monarch, “have we given thee.” Ex. xxv. 5. 1 Chr. xxix. 14. The tithes required of the Israelites, are spoken of as consecrated to the immediate service of God. They are said to be the *Lord's*—to be *holy unto the Lord*—things which were *consecrated to the Lord their God*. Lev. xxvii. 30. 2 Chr. xxxi. 6. The alms which are given to the poor, are represented as being also given to the Lord : “He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth to the Lord.” Prov. xix. 17. See Matt. xxv. 40. Having shown what is intended by the consecration of a portion of our substance to the Lord, I proceed,

2. To show, that to make such a consecration of property, is *obligatory*. Its obligatoriness is made evident by explicit commands.—What can be more explicit than the command, “Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase ?” Prov. iii. 9. In delivering this command, Solomon probably had his eye fixed on Ex. xxii. 29 ; where the Lord says to the Israelite, “Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits and of thy liquors : the first born of thy sons shalt thou give unto me.” The Lord did not leave it optional with the people whether to pay tithes to him or not. Nor did he mean they should consider them in the light of a gratuity. They were strictly commanded to bring all the tithes into the storehouse. Mal. iii. 10. Lev. xxvii. 30. In their annual solemnities, pecuniary offerings, as well as worship, were enjoined upon them : “They shall not,” said their lawgiver, “appear before the Lord *empty* : every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee.” Deut. xvi. 16, 17. The giving of alms to the poor, is enjoined with as much explicitness as other duties. Thus it is written in the law of Moses : “If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren, within any of thy

gates, in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thy heart nor shut thy hand from thy poor brother ; but thou shalt open thy hand wide unto him." Deut. xv. 7—11.

Some may think that these Old Testament precepts do not apply to New Testament times. The particular manner of rendering obedience to some of them, may have undergone a change ; but the duty they required, can not have been abrogated ; for both the kingdom of God and the poor, we yet have with us. The Supreme Proprietor still levies a tax on our earthly substance, for the support of his holy institutions, and for the comfort of the poor. In the New Testament, he commands, " Let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth, in all good things."—" Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honor ; especially they who labor in word and doctrine : for the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his reward."—Gal. vi. 6. 1 Tim. v. 17, 18. What is here required, answers to the tithes of the Old Testament. The New, as well as the Old Testament, provides for the support of the ministers of the sanctuary : nor does it overlook the wants of the poor. It is one of the commands of Christ, " Give alms of such things as ye have : " and he intimated, that as we should always have the poor with us, it would be one of our standing duties to be always doing them good. Luke xi. 41. Mark xiv. 7.—The apostle, guided by the same spirit, said, " But to do good and communicate, forget not ; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Heb. xiii. 16.

The consecration of property to God's service, is virtually inculcated in its being so often mentioned among the ingredients of an approved character. The scriptures represent no man as giving evidence of unfeigned piety, who is not willing to honor the Lord with his substance, as well as with his prayers. They who withhold from the sacred treasury, that portion of their substance which is due to it, are represented as impious. Mal. iii. 8. The *alms*, as well as the prayers of Cornelius, came up as a memorial before God. And the alms-deeds of Dorcas, are represented as constituting the most attractive feature in her amiable character. The same remark will apply to the well beloved Gaius, to whom the apostle John wrote one of his epistles. His alms seemed much to resemble the missionary contributions of the present day. See 3 John, 5—8. David describes the man of grace as one to whom acts of beneficence are natural. At one time he says of him, " He is ever merciful and lendeth : " at another, " He considereth the poor : " and at another, " He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor ; his righteousness endureth forever." Ps. xxxvii. 26 ; xli. 1 ; cxii. 9. Though the graceless pharisees paid their tithes with great exactness, (and the Savior did not, as some have imagined, condemn them for this exactness,) yet they did not fully carry out this branch of duty ; for instead of being liberal to the poor, they devoured widows' houses. Having shown what the scriptures mean by pecuniary consecrations to the Lord, and that they evidently consider such consecrations as among our moral obligations, there remains but one thing more under this division of the Article : which is to show,

3. The reasons for classing this duty among those which we owe



to *God*. In the performance of this duty, God is to be regarded not only as the ultimate, but the *immediate* object ; for our pecuniary offerings, as really as our prayers, are required to be presented to him.—Honoring him with our substance, as manifestly ranks among the duties of godliness, as does the observance of the Sabbath. In the latter instance, we separate *time* from secular to religious purposes ; in the former, we do the same with property. That the consecration of property to sacred uses ranks with the duties of godliness, may be inferred from the *times* and *places* appointed for its performance. By divine appointment, it stands connected with the services of religion. When the tribes of Israel went up to the house of the Lord to engage in acts of religious worship, they were required to fill their hands with pecuniary offerings. Deut. xvi. 16, 17. At the same holy times and places in which they presented their prayers and songs of praise, they presented their offerings. While they were called upon to sing unto the Lord and bless his name, they were required to *bring an offering and come into his courts*. Ps. xcvi. 2, 8. Their silver and gold, when set apart for a sacred use, did not pollute his holy courts, nor his holy days. The apostle designates the Christian Sabbath, as being the most proper time for setting apart money for the Lord's treasury. To the church at Corinth, he gave this direction concerning the collection of charity money : "Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."

The representation which the scriptures make, of the manner in which the ministers of religion are to receive their support, will justify the classification given to this duty. The Lord claims the honor of supporting his ministers from his own treasury. To Aaron he says, "Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them : *I am thy part and thine inheritance* among the children of Israel. And behold, *I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance*, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation." Num. xviii. 20, 21. To enable the God of Israel to make good his engagements to the priestly tribe, he required the other tribes to consecrate to him a tenth of all their produce. They were not to consider these tithes as a gratuity, but as a rent, due to the Lord of all the earth. Into his treasury rather than that of the Levites, were they required to bring their tithes, that at his expense his ministers might be supported. In accordance with this view of things, the charge against them, when they withheld the tithes, was not that they had wronged the Levites, but that they had *robbed God*. Mal. iii. 8.

In the same light are we now to view the maintenance of the ministers of Christ. After the apostle had spoken of the provision which the Lord made for the support of the ministers of religion, under the former dispensation, he adds, "Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the gospel, should live of the gospel." 1 Cor. ix. 14. In whatever way their support is raised, it ought to be considered as property consecrated to Christ, to furnish means for him to take care of his ministers. If those are gospel times, which are predicted in the latter part of Ezekiel's prophecy, (and it is generally supposed

they are,) then the ministers of religion, under the present dispensation, ought to be considered as receiving their maintenance directly from the hand of God. Concerning these ministers of his, he is represented as saying, "I am their inheritance : and ye shall give them no possession in Israel : I am their possession." Ezek. xlv. 28. "Thus (says Dr. Scott in his notes on the passage) they would have no inheritance distinct from the portion which God reserved for himself. They would be maintained, so to speak, at his table ; and would forfeit their support if his worship should be forsaken."

We have now seen, that the property employed in sustaining religious institutions, is considered as being first consecrated to the Lord. The same is true concerning that which is employed for the relief of the indigent. It is represented as being first devoted to Him, who declares himself to be "the Father of the fatherless, and the Judge of the widows, in his holy habitation." It is so represented in this passage : "Then shalt thou say before the Lord thy God, I have brought away the *hallowed things* out of my house, and also have given them to the *Levite* and unto the *stranger*, to the *fatherless* and to the *widow*, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me." Deut. xxvi. 13. Here we learn that the hallowed things were designed, not only to support the Levite, but to furnish means for relieving the necessities of the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. Contributions for the relief of such of the poor as have rendered us no service, may, in distinction from those which are made for the support of a preached gospel, be considered as a gratuity ; but in God's estimation, these contributions have but one character : both are claimed for the treasury of the Lord, and both are considered as *debts*, and not gifts. And since he has drawn orders on us to pay a part of these dues to the poor and needy, it is, in a sense, *due to them*. Hence the propriety of the language used by the wise man, when he says, "Withhold not good from them to whom it is *due*, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it." Prov. iii. 27. The Lord has appointed the poor, especially his own poor, to be the receivers of a part of that property which he requires to be consecrated to his service. Gal. vi. 10. When, therefore, in the spirit of love and obedience, we pay it over to them, he is pleased to consider himself as having received it at our hands ; and in the day of judgment, he will let us see that it was passed to our account : "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matt. xxv. 40.\*

II. The *beneficial influence* of this duty will now be considered. If it be demanded, What profit is there in the consecration of a portion of our substance to the Lord ? we may safely answer, as Paul did in another case, *Much every way*.

1st. *He* who is worthy of our supreme regard, is *honored* as well as obeyed by it. "*Honor the Lord* with thy substance." He asserts

\* In the classification which I have given to this duty, I find I am supported by the authority of Mr. Henry. In giving us the contents of Exodus xxii. he says, "The laws of this chapter relate—III. To *first table* duties ; forbidding witchcraft, (v. 18) idolatry, (v. 20) and commanding to *offer the first fruits*, (v. 29, 30.)" The first fruits, it will be remembered, made up a part of their hallowed things—their consecrated property.

his unalienable right to all the lands covered by our deeds ; to all the herds and flocks fed in our stalls and pastures ; and to all the silver and gold in our public banks and private coffers. He claims the earth as his, and the fullness thereof—the world, and they that dwell therein. He declares, “Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.” “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts.” Ps. xxiv. 1 ; l. 10. Hag. ii. 8. The truth is, that we are not, in the most proper sense, owners, but tenants and stewards ; and this we practically admit, when we set apart a portion of our earnings to the immediate service of God. When the Israelite brought his basket of first fruits to the place where the Lord had recorded his name, it was a striking acknowledgment that the land which had yielded him these fruits, was the gift of God. See Deut. xxvi. 1—11.

2dly. The duty we are considering, has an intimate connection with the advancement of the best of causes—the cause of God. In this ruined world, he has set up a kingdom of holiness and peace. In proportion as it is advanced, we are truly blest. We well know it is a kingdom whose glory does not consist in the riches of the earth ; yet while it is located upon the earth, it needs such corruptible things as silver and gold to promote its interests. Sanctuaries for the worship of God, and ministers devoted to the service of the sanctuaries, are needed ; and the former can not be built, nor the latter maintained, without earthly substance. Money is required for the purpose of multiplying translations and copies of the Bible ; for enlarging the number of ministers and missionaries ; for extending and perpetuating the operations of various benevolent institutions—in short, for relieving the temporal and spiritual necessities of men every where, and supplying a fallen world with the word of God, a preached gospel, and all the varied means of grace.

3dly. A faithful attention to the duty inculcated in this Article, would greatly meliorate the condition of the suffering poor. There is property enough in the world to render all its inhabitants comfortable ; but it is so unequally distributed, that while some have more than heart could wish, others have not wherewith to procure even the necessities of life. The Supreme Owner of all this property, forbids the poor to steal from the rich ; but he at the same time commands the rich to remember the poor, and to open wide their hand to them. Let such of the rich as feel inclined to deny the validity of this claim, consider how great a debt they owe to him who is the Patron of the poor. Assisting the needy is one of the ways in which, as God’s tenants, they are required to pay him their rents. How much human misery might be relieved ; how many of the naked might be clothed, the hungry fed, and the ignorant instructed ; if all the tithes were brought into the Lord’s store-house.

4thly. The influence this duty exerts on the character of those who yield to its obligation, is not the least considerable among the benefits derived from it. Useful as property is, the possession of it, at least to any great amount, endangers our morals and our salvation. The argument on which Agur founds his deprecation of riches, is this : “Lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord ?” The urging of such an argument against being made rich, supposes wealth



to have a tendency to render men haughty and irreligious. We know with what emphasis the Savior spoke of the peculiar difficulties attending the salvation of the rich. Mark x. 23. The apostle tells us that covetousness is idolatry, and that the love of money is the root of all evil. Col. iii. 5. 1 Tim. vi. 10. Now what shall we do to counteract this idolatrous love of money? Shall we inculcate a cessation from business, or even a careless attention to it? This would not accord with the apostle's injunction to the Romans: "Be not *slothful* in business." A covetous spirit is more advantageously counteracted by pious liberality, than by a cessation from business. One of the principal reasons why the streams of wealth expose their owner to be drowned in them, is that he suffers them to become *ponded*. Let him seasonably open channels of benevolence for them to flow out, in proportion as they flow in, and his exposure will be greatly diminished.

It is the nature of a covetous spirit to hoard, or, according to a common adage, to *keep what we have got, and get what we can*. This avaricious spirit is unlovely, and very corrupting to the mind: it ought therefore to be resolutely and diligently counteracted. And by giving back to Him from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift, a valuable part of what we have already earned, (or rather received,) we do much to counteract our avaricious feelings, and to cherish a spirit of piety and benevolence. By devoting suitable portions of our property to the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, we do that which is calculated to increase our attachment to that kingdom; and by liberally aiding the poor, our feelings of benevolence towards them are greatly expanded. Thus what we give, not only glorifies God, and promotes the happiness of our fellow men, but proves an unspeakable benefit to ourselves. If expending half our property in works of piety and beneficence, should prevent our idolizing the remainder, the sacrifice we make is truly gainful; for better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than ever so much without it. Property is a good thing with which to serve God, but it makes a poor god to serve. To idolize it is not only impious, but destructive to happiness.

In speaking of the beneficial influence of this duty, I would just add, that it gives a peculiar attractiveness to the light of the church. When the members of this hallowed community exhibit practical and decisive evidence, that they love God, his cause, and the salvation of their fellow men, more than they love money, the moral superiority of the church becomes apparent. Men behold their good works, and glorify their Father who is in heaven. The unregenerate are now prepared more candidly to hear those texts discoursed from, which aver that the children of God possess a character as radically different from their own, as disinterested love is different from selfishness. My remarks here might be advantageously extended, but it is time that I proceed to show,

III. The importance of observing some *system* in the performance of this duty.

It ought not to satisfy our consciences that we devote a portion of our substance to the Lord, unless it be a *suitable* portion; nor that we sometimes do it, unless we repeat it with a suitable frequency. Under the law, some of the offerings to the Lord's treasury were stated,

and some were occasional. It is highly proper that some *specific proportion* of our gains, should constitute our stated offerings. What, it may be asked, ought that proportion to be? If a certain proportion is to be fixed upon as a kind of common rule, I think the scriptures would lead us to fix upon a *tenth*. This was the proportion which Abraham devoted of the spoils which he had taken in battle. This was what Jacob promised when he made his vow in Bethel; and it was this which was afterwards required of all the sons of Jacob from generation to generation. Gen. xiv. 20; xxviii. 22. Lev. xxvii. 30. Nor is it difficult to see that as large a proportion as this was needed, when one whole tribe out of twelve was employed in the execution of the priestly office, and in serving the tabernacle.

But at the present period, it will be said, there can be no need of devoting so large a portion of our substance to sacred purposes. True, it is not necessary for the support of the stated ministry, since that work does not need an equal number of hands: and yet a full tithe of our income may be as much needed now, as it was under the former dispensation. The ceremonial observances we know were expensive; but while these remained in force, the church had not received the commission to go forth and disciple the nations. The labor and expense of effecting the conversion of the world, has fallen to the lot of the New Testament church. It is a peculiar favor conferred on us, that we have such a glorious work to do. And is it not our duty as cheerfully to bring *all the tithes* into the Lord's store-house, in order to multiply translations and copies of the holy scriptures, and to support missionaries among the heathen, as it was the duty of the children of Israel to do it, to enable the tribe of Levi to devote themselves exclusively to the religious interests of their own nation? The claim which the Lord's treasury has upon us, was never more imperious than at the present period; and never did money have a greater religious value in the eyes of them who love Zion. The calls for money to be devoted to benevolent objects, are becoming more urgent every year; and there is no reason to doubt, that before the whole world shall be evangelized, the obligation to devote to the Lord's immediate use at least a tenth of our incomes, will be acknowledged by all his true worshippers.

A *stated* appropriation of a certain *proportion* of our income\* to pious and charitable objects, is no unimportant item of the duty now before us. It will be generally acknowledged that we are under obligation to contribute of our substance, not only for the relief of the poor, but for the support of the gospel among ourselves, and for the diffusion of its blessings through the world. But if we make no *specific appropriation* for these objects, there is danger we shall do far less for them than we ought; and that whenever we are called upon to give for benevolent purposes, our innate covetousness will interpose numerous, and oftentimes insuperable obstacles. On the other hand, if we have once solemnly devoted a certain proportion of our income to pious objects, we shall no longer consider this proportion as our own. The

\* Let it be remembered that by *income*, is meant all our earnings, and not the surplus that remains after our own living is taken out.

proportion being determined upon, we are at once prepared to expend it on various benevolent objects, according to their comparative importance. The main point is already settled; that this part of our earnings is the Lord's: and by the light of scripture we learn, that *every devoted thing is most holy to the Lord.* Lev. xxvii. 28.

Should any one think that a tenth of his income is more than he can consecrate, let him fix on some less proportion. It will be better to consecrate a twentieth, or even a fiftieth, than to make no definite consecration at all. If any one who is desirous of devoting a full tithe, should be afraid it will not leave him enough for the support of his family, let him make trial of it for one or two years, reserving to himself the liberty, if found necessary, of reducing the sum at the end of this term. But let him make the trial with cheerfulness, and in dependence on Him to whose service this treasure is consecrated.

When a part of our substance has been deliberately devoted to God, whether we have put our names to any obligatory bond or not, we may not fall short of the limit we have prescribed, unless impelled by absolute necessity; but if God should prosper us we may go beyond it. The scripture encourages the presentation of *free-will* offerings, as well as of vows. Num. xxix. 39. The free-will offerings are probably what are termed *presents*, in this passage in the 76th Psalm: "Vow and pay unto the Lord your God: let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared." Special deliverances and smiles of Providence, are very properly acknowledged by special appropriations for the benefit of that holy interest which, in distinction from every other, is God's *own cause*. The tithes which Abraham gave to Melchisedec, priest of the most high God, were a thank offering for the splendid victory which he had just obtained over the kings. Gen. xiv. 17—20. See also Num. xxxi. 48—54.\*

IV. The binding nature of this duty having been already shown, it remains that I now speak of the *extent* of its obligation. There is reason to fear that this part of practical religion will not be considered as of *universal* obligation; but rather as one of those duties which confine their claims to a few.

Some may think that this duty is binding on none but the members of Christ's church. It is true that Christians ought to consider themselves under covenant vows to its performance; but the obligation rests on *all men*; for "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof, the world, and *they that dwell therein.*" This duty is obligatory on men in every station of life. The *rulers* of the people are not exempted from its claims. The king on his throne is under obligation in this, as well as in other ways, to honor the King of kings.

The *ministers of religion* are not freed from obligation to make their offerings to the Lord's treasury. In this, as well as in other duties, they should be examples to the flock. The circumstance of their living on tithes, does not excuse them from paying tithes. The *Levites*, when they had received their tithes from the children of Israel, were

\* Before we class the offerings which we make to the Lord's treasury, under the head of *presents*, it behoves us to pay up all our arrears. There are not a few who accumulated great estates, before the duty which is inculcated in this Article was recognized, or even considered.



required to offer a heave-offering of it unto the Lord—even a tenth part of the tithe. See Num. xviii. 26. This they were to give to the *priests*, namely, to Aaron and his sons ; who doubtless were in their turn required, by a similar consecration, to acknowledge God as the author of life and all its supports.

This duty is binding on the *rich* and on the *poor*. The rich are, in a special sense, the Lord's treasurers ; and their superiority over the poor, chiefly consists in their ability to do more to relieve the temporal and spiritual wants of their fellow men. With great propriety, then, might Paul say to Timothy, " Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy ; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate ; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." 1 Tim. vi. 17—19.

If any class of men can plead an exemption from this duty, it is the *poor* ; but even they are not exempt ; as we shall see by recurring to the word of God. When the children of Israel were numbered, there was a small pecuniary offering required ; concerning which it was said, " The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less." Ex. xxx. 15. The poor as well as the rich, were required to pay the tithe : they, too, were taxed in proportion to their income. It was into " the offerings of God " that the *poor widow* cast her two mites ; an act for which she obtained the Savior's approbation. From this case it may be inferred, that even living on alms does not exempt from the duty of alms-giving. Why is it not as suitable to acknowledge God, by consecrating to him a portion of those good things which he sends us by the hand of charity, as by devoting a part of those which are obtained by the hand of labor ? Our divine Master was supported by charitable contributions ; and yet from a store thus acquired, he was in the practice of giving something to the poor. Compare Luke viii. 3, with John xiii. 29.

*Debtors* are not exempted from this duty. If any should say, " We are involved in debt, and must pay what we owe to men, before we can do anything for the Lord's treasury ; " let them be reminded that His claim on them is as old, as well founded, and as urgent, as any other. The Israelites were all required to pay their tithes ; as well the borrower as the lender, as well the debtor as the creditor. If the debtor had not wherewith to cancel all his debts, still he had a right to pay his tithes. His case resembled that of a tenant, whose means of supplying the wants of his family and paying his debts, wholly depend on the productions of a farm which is not his own, but belongs to his landlord. As the tenant has a right to pay the rent of his farm, without being chargeable with fraud to his creditors, so had the debtor in Israel a right to pay his tithe into the Lord's treasury.—And are not debtors, as well as other men, still the Lord's tenants ? And does he not say to them in common with others, " Honor the Lord with thy substance ? " The man who is deeply involved in debt, may not, perhaps, be at liberty to gratify his benevolent feelings to the full extent, and to consecrate as much property to charitable purposes as

he otherwise would. But until his charitable contributions shall exceed a *tithe*, or whatever proportion of his earnings he may consider as really due to the Lord's treasury, he does not thereby render himself guilty of robbery for burnt-offering. While it is incumbent on the debtor to make every possible retrenchment in his own expenses, that he may be more able to satisfy the claims of his creditors, it does not become him to make his retrenchments consist in withholding from the sacred treasury those offerings which, like prayer and sabbath-sanctification, are demanded of all.

Some may think that the Lord's claim is on the *creditor*, whose ability to consecrate property to His treasury, will be increased by receiving from the debtor what he owes him. They will say, until the debtor has satisfied the demands of the creditor, he is liberal with another man's property. This view of the subject, though plausible, I think is not correct. The ground we assume is this; that He who is the Proprietor of the earth, claims a portion of their substance from all who either acquire or possess property; and that the obligation to meet this claim, can not be transferred from one individual to another. If each one does not himself pay in his proportion, he can not be certain that it will ever reach the Lord's treasury. There is another potent reason, why each man should pay his own rent to the Supreme Landlord: if any other plan be adopted, the Lord's treasury suffers a great loss. Suppose that twenty men, each of whose earnings are equal to five hundred dollars a year, should pay the amount of what would be the Lord's tithe of their income, to a certain man who was their common creditor; and suppose this man were to give to God a tithe of all his income: his tithe of the thousand dollars which he receives from those twenty men, would be only one hundred dollars. In this case, the Lord's treasury would receive only one tenth of its dues, or of what it would receive, provided each man were to pay his own tithe.

If the consecration of a portion of our substance to sacred uses, is one of the duties of godliness, why release debtors from its performance? Why not with equal propriety say, that debtors are excused from spending any time in prayer, reading God's word, sanctifying the Sabbath, or making a profession of religion and walking with the church? All these duties will require time, in which they might be doing something to pay their debts. If, notwithstanding their pecuniary embarrassments, the Lord has a right to be honored with some portion of their time, why has he not an equal right to be honored with some portion of their substance?

If *debtors* are under no obligation to devote property to the Lord's treasury, a large proportion of community will think themselves excused from this duty. And here I would say, we do well to inquire whether a guilty neglect in this particular, be not one cause why so many of us are burdened with debt. If the word of God can be relied on, we have more reason to fear being impoverished by the neglect, than by the performance, of the duty in question. How else can we understand such passages as these? "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that

watereth, shall be watered also himself." Prov. xi. 24, 25. "Bring ye all the tithes into the store-house, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. Mal. iii. 10. Barns filled with plenty, are promised to such as honor the Lord with their substance. Prov. iii. 9, 10. [See the prophecy of Haggai.] The Savior says, "Give alms of such things as ye have, and behold, all things are clean unto you." Luke xi. 41. If we refuse to give the alms which the Lord demands, we draw down his curse upon our whole store. When the Lord's portion is withheld and laid up for our children, what is this but to treasure up wrath for them? If we can secure for them the blessing of God, it is the most valuable inheritance we can leave them. And this is to be done by scattering, rather than by hoarding. "I have been young and now am old," said David; "yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful and lendeth; and his seed is blessed." Ps. xxxvii. 25, 26.

Finally. The duty of consecrating property to the Lord, is incumbent on *females* as well as males. The scriptures manifestly approve them for doing it. Honorable mention is made of the zeal, liberality, and labors of the female part of the congregation of Israel, when a tabernacle was required for the worship of God. "All the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen. And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom, spun goats' hair.—The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and *woman*, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work." Ex. xxxv. 25, 26, 29. The Savior himself lived on property which was devoted to this object by female hands. While he, with the twelve, went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God, certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, ministered unto him of their substance. Luke viii. 1—3. It was a woman who poured the costly ointment on the head of Christ, just before his crucifixion; of which act he not only approved, but declared that wherever his gospel should be preached in the whole world, there it should be told for a memorial of her. The same holy women who ministered to the wants of Christ while he was alive, prepared spices and ointments to anoint him when he was dead. Compare Matt. xxvii. 55, with Luke xxiii. 55, 56.

It is objected by some, that women have not the control of property, and therefore can have no right to consecrate it. To this it may be answered; 1. That there are some women, namely, widows, and those who remain unmarried, who enjoy as full a right to the control of property as men do. 2. The scriptures allow wives, and daughters in their father's house, to make vows of this kind; though they suffer the husband and the father to disallow them, if they choose. See Num. xxx. In these holy writings, we find alms-giving approved of in women, as much as in men. The "virtuous woman" whose character is delineated in the last chapter of Proverbs, has a husband; and yet it is mentioned among her other virtues, that she stretches out her hand



to the poor, and reaches forth her hands to the needy. The woman of Shunem had a husband; and yet she it was, rather than her husband, who constrained Elisha to eat bread: and it was at her instance, that a little chamber was built on purpose for the accommodation of the Lord's prophet.

It would cause a great defect indeed in the female character, were this excellent trait to be left out of it. This was a distinguishing characteristic of the amiable Dorcas; and was spoken of by the weeping widows who stood around her breathless body. That no female can be lovely without it, is clearly implied by the prominent place which the apostle gives it, in describing the character of such women as were to be specially honored by the church: "Let not a widow be taken into the number, under three-score years old; having been the wife of one man, well reported of for good works: if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work." 1 Tim. v. 9, 10. Surely, the widow here described must have been, even when she was a wife, given to hospitality and works of beneficence.

I am happy to acknowledge that my arguments to enforce female liberality, have been anticipated, as it were, by those for whom they were intended; and that, in this important period of the world, very many females are manifesting the deep interest they take in the progress of the Redeemer's kingdom, by making frequent and liberal contributions for its promotion. May they persevere in their efforts to do good, until their example shall have allured their more reluctant sisters, and provoked to emulation their still more reluctant brethren.

#### THE ARTICLE HARMONIZED.

There is a visible agreement between this, and the duty which was last considered, namely, that of making an open profession of godliness. If we are under obligation to consecrate *ourselves* to the service of God, it can not be right to withhold from him our *substance*. Nor can there be evidence that we have given ourselves to the Lord, so long as we refuse to admit his claims on our property.—There is also a manifest agreement between this duty and that which is exhibited in the *third* Article, namely, the consecration of a portion of our time to the immediate service of God. The whole of our time and property belong to God; and this truth we practically acknowledge, when we devote to him a portion of each. There would be no harmony between an acknowledgment of his right to a portion of our time, and a denial of his right to a portion of our property.

The duty I am now urging, accords with that which was brought into view in the *second* practical Article. There we saw it was every man's duty to acquaint himself with the revealed will of God, both by reading his word, and by hearing it preached. But it would be inconsistent for any to say they desired these means of knowledge, while they were unwilling to be at the expense required to procure them. None are under obligation to spend their money for that which is not bread

—to help maintain men who preach a spurious gospel. But all who are seeking to know the mind of God, and who are faithfully taught it by his ministers, will feel the propriety of the apostolic direction, “Let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth, in all good things.”

There is a harmony between the consecration of property to God’s immediate service, and those acts of worship which were described under the *first* Article. They are both suitable ways of acknowledging God’s supremacy, and our dependence on him. Our worship is the fruit of our lips, and the substance with which we honor him is the labor of our hands; and both are designed to express the homage of our hearts. That they constitute a harmonious expression of it, may be learned from our being required to sometimes present them as one united offering. In the following passage they are thus united: “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: *bring an offering*, and come before him: *worship the Lord* in the beauty of holiness.”\* 2 Chr. xvi. 29. See also Deut. xvi. 16.

The duty enjoined in this Article, is the natural fruit of the whole system of Christian experiences. It grows out of the love of *good will*, which is the source of all holy affections. This love embraces the interests of the kingdom of God, and the good of our fellow men: and what can be more natural, than that such an expansive affection should readily devote earthly treasure, however hardly earned, to the promotion of so desirable an object? To love God, and yet be unwilling to serve him, unless it be with that which costs us nothing, is inconsistent. Nor can that love to men be real, which puts them off with good wishes for their happiness, and refuses to submit to the pecuniary expense necessary to promote it. Real love will make sacrifices to accomplish its desired object. “For ye know,” said the apostle, “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” 2 Cor. viii. 9. The love of good will prepares the heart to consecrate earthly treasure to the Lord, to be used in promoting the salvation of men whom we have never seen—yea, in promoting the good of those who hate us. And holy *complacency* in Christ and his disciples, will make us delight to employ a portion of our substance in promoting his glory, and their edification.

*Submission* to God is one essential ingredient in the religion of the heart; and the Psalmist represents every one that returns to God, as submitting himself with pieces of silver. Ps. lxxviii. 30. Thus the wise men from the east, submitted themselves to the infant Redeemer. The pieces of silver are not brought to purchase favor, but are an expression of a real, unfeigned surrender to God. The young man in the gospel, could not be prevailed on thus to submit himself to Christ, but went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.—*Repentance* will not be apt to overlook that root of all evil, the love of money; and

\* There is a sweet harmony between the prayer and the pecuniary offerings of the monthly concert. Would it not tend to increase both the prayers and offerings of the church, were those Christians who are on these occasions detained at home, to retire to the closet with their offering in their hand, and on their knees present it to the Lord, to be devoted to the advancement of the same holy cause for which they pour out their prayers?

if it bring forth the meet fruits, it will effect a reform in this, as well as in other things; and will prompt to alms-giving as one of the best means of destroying this bitter root.—While repentance promotes liberality by begetting a holy loathing of covetousness, *faith* promotes it in another way. Faith confides in the great Giver and Owner of all our property, that good will be effected, and we not impoverished, by our consecrating a liberal portion of it to his immediate service; that he will verify this promise; “The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth, shall be watered also himself.” By faith, we view all things as being in the hand of God; who has power to succeed our undertakings, or to render them abortive, according to his sovereign pleasure.—The Christian *hope*, whether it has in prospect the future enlargement of Zion, or the blessedness of the heavenly world, has a tendency to promote holy liberality. Can we have our hope in heaven, and yet not be willing to part with the perishing goods of earth, to advance that kingdom which can not be moved?—*Humility* is also in unison with the duty which is now before us. Pride craves an abundance of earthly substance, but humility is contented with a little. The former prompts men to say, *We are not able to give*; while those who cherish the latter exclaim, *We are fully able*.—*Thirsting for righteousness* will manifestly counteract a thirst for gold.—A *forgiving* spirit led the Savior to pray and die for his enemies; and if the same spirit pervades us, we shall make voluntary and liberal contributions to relieve the wants, both temporal and spiritual, of those who hate us.—Between the spirit of *self-denial*, and a liberal consecration of earthly substance to God, there surely is not the least discord, but a visible harmony.—A *thankful* and a liberal spirit, are fully in unison; so that a thankful spirit will lead us to make *thank-offerings*. The most liberal consecration of property to the Lord’s treasury of which we read in the scriptures, appears to have been prompted by profound gratitude to God, for all the blessings of which they who offered it had been made the recipients. Nor were they less grateful that he had given them a liberal heart, than that he had put it into their power to make a liberal offering; for they clearly saw that both were the gift of God. I refer to the munificent offering which, just before his death, David and his people made for the building of the temple. See 1 Chron. xxix.—*Holy meditation* is harmonious with the duty of consecrating property to the honor and service of the Lord. They who muse much on God and the interests of his kingdom, will feel that the chief value of money consists in its being one necessary means of promoting the extension of that kingdom.

This duty, so manifestly in accordance with all the duties and experiences of the Christian, can not be at variance with that system of *doctrines* which is according to godliness. It will be sufficient to show that there is a manifest agreement between this, and the first three Articles in the doctrinal series. The *first* of these exhibits Jehovah as the only living and true God; and the consecration of a portion of our property to him, is a practical acknowledgment of his existence and supremacy. It is honoring the Lord with our substance. Our *second* doctrine exhibits the eternal God as making and managing all things for his own glory; and with this doctrinal truth, the duty



now enjoined fully coalesces. It is the very language of the offerings which we make to the treasury of the Lord, "Of *thine own* have we given thee." Our *third* doctrine relates to the moral government which the Supreme Being exercises over his intelligent family. According to that doctrine, it is his unquestionable right to give us law, and to control all our actions. As our moral Governor, he has a perfect right to direct us how to use our money. No other sovereign in the universe possesses such an indisputable right to tax the property of his subjects for the support of government, and the promotion of the welfare of his kingdom: for he is the owner of all the property which is in the hands of his subjects, in a higher sense than can be true of any other sovereign.

To some it may seem, that this Article of our practical system is at variance with the immateriality of the Supreme Being, and also with his absolute independence and all-sufficiency. They may think it makes him appear too much like the gods of the heathen, to whom costly offerings are made to supply their wants. The scriptures, however, have been very explicit in making us know, that the oblations which we are required to present to Jehovah, are not provisions that he needs for himself. How emphatically is this expressed in his address to Israel, in the 50th Psalm: "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?" The same sentiment was forcibly expressed by Paul, when he stood in the midst of Mars' hill, declaring to the superstitious Athenians the unknown God:—"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." Acts xvii. 24, 25. The pecuniary offerings which the Lord requires of us, are not to be laid out on his own person, but are all to be expended here on the earth; either in supplying the wants of the poor, whose cause he has espoused, or in promoting the interests of that holy kingdom, which is of ten thousand times more importance to us, than all the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them.

But why, it may be asked, can not the all-sufficient God support the interests of his kingdom, without our pecuniary aid? What if he can? Because he, in his sovereignty, does not see fit to do it, shall we presume to complain? Is it not a privilege that we may be workers together with God, in the building up of his kingdom on the earth? What a privilege it is, that with property, none of which can be carried away with us when we die, we may do something, yea, do much, to further the interests of a kingdom so great, glorious, and durable!

The thought now occurs, that some reader may imagine he can discover a want of harmony between this, and the *eleventh* of the doctrinal Articles, namely, *justification by faith, without works of merit*. There would be a want of harmony between them, had the consecration of property to the Lord's treasury been represented as a meritorious act. It has been shown to be a reasonable service, and when rightly performed, well pleasing to God. It has also been shown that the Lord has promised to reward this service; but in this, as in all other cases

of obedience, the reward is not of debt, but of grace. And let it be remembered, that should we give all our goods to feed the poor, without being prompted to it by supreme love to God, the act would not gain his approbation. And when our charitable giving does proceed from holy motives, it is no work of *supererogation*; since we give to the Lord nothing but what we have first received from him. Such offerings do nothing to diminish the grace displayed in our justification. He who substitutes his alms-deeds for the Savior's righteousness, will find them to be a poor substitute. If the man who has spent his life in laying up treasure for *himself*, thinks to *purchase* a seat in paradise, by a liberal offering to the Lord's treasury at his death, he will experience sad disappointment when he shall awake in the world of spirits.

## REMARKS.

1. This Article furnishes no inconsiderable test of Christian character. Not that every one who gives money to feed the poor, or to build a sanctuary, or to maintain the preaching of the gospel, is a Christian. Some who are no Christians, nor so much as believers in the religion of Christ, have nevertheless a natural generosity; and this they not unfrequently display in relieving the indigent, and sometimes even in sending the news of a Savior's death to the heathen world. And others who have no inherent liberality, may, on extraordinary occasions, be excited to generous acts. But something more than a mere constitutional generosity, or a few splendid benefactions, is necessary to establish the character of Christian liberality. Such a character is established by an *habitual* consecration of property to the Lord's treasury—by giving freely, without needing to be pressed—by giving liberally, to the extent of one's power—by doing it with a single eye, not letting his left hand know what his right hand doeth—and with humility, acknowledging that what is devoted to the Lord, was first received from him. Such things as these indicate the principle of Christian benevolence to be seated in the heart. As every display of a covetous spirit injures the Christian character, so every thing which evinces a heart to devise liberal things for the relief of the necessitous and the furtherance of the gospel, adds to its lustre. When the disciple of Christ labors as willingly to earn money for his Master's use, as for his own—as willingly curtails his expenses in order to do more for the evangelizing of the world, as for the purpose of buying a field or building a house; he exhibits some practical evidence, that he feels himself to be nothing more than the Lord's steward.

2. Before we leave this Article, suffer me to urge upon my readers a compliance with the duty it inculcates. Let us not look upon it as we would upon a stranger, who had obtruded himself upon us. Scarcely a single family would feel either able or willing to meet the additional expense of providing for one such stranger; and yet there are few families that can not provide, and that cheerfully, for all those children which Providence throws upon their care. If we view the Lord's treasury in the light of a stranger, that has been quartered upon us without our consent, to support it, will seem an intolerable burden.

But let us once give it the place of a dear child, and we can do, and continue to do for it: we can even multiply our appropriations for its sacred use, and bless the Lord that we have such a way of doing good with our property.

The duty before us is one of great magnitude; and yet it is one that we are in more danger of entirely neglecting or postponing, than almost any other. Our offerings for the Lord's treasury are needed, and they are needed now. The world is to be converted; and but little time remains (unless the scripture prophecies have been altogether misunderstood) for the accomplishment of this great work. Laborers have already entered the field; and these need to be encouraged both by our prayers and alms. But their number needs to be greatly augmented. There is no time to lose. If the Lord's treasury ever had a claim upon us, it certainly has never been more urgent than at the present crisis. Let us be up and doing; for while we are lingering, millions are dying without the knowledge of the only Savior of lost men. Let none of us pray to be excused: let us rather esteem it an unspeakable privilege, that we may become instrumental in extending the Redeemer's kingdom to the ends of the world. If we can not cast in our pounds, let us cast in our pence. But let us remember those words of the apostle; "He which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully."

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### DUTIES WHICH WE OWE TO MEN.

MEN are not the only creatures whom we are to love. Our benevolent affections should rise high enough to embrace all the angels of light, and descend low enough to include every thing that has life and a susceptibility of enjoyment: but our *external* duties, pertaining to the second table of the law, are chiefly confined to our own race. The angels we are bound to love, and in their blessedness to rejoice; but while we are on the earth, there is no particular way in which we can reciprocate their kind offices. While we are bound to feel benevolently towards the entire brute creation, that portion of it that is subjected to our more immediate control and service, claims from us benevolent actions as well as feelings. It is a part of our duty to furnish them their necessary food, to use them tenderly, and to give them no unnecessary pain. Still it is true that almost all our external duties, which do not come under the class of godliness, are duties which we owe, not to angels or to brutes, but to *men*.

The class of duties now to be considered, includes those we owe to *ourselves*. When the Savior summed up the ten commandments in two, which comprehended all our duties to God and men, he divided the second of these into two parts, to distinguish between the duties which we owe to others, and those which we owe to ourselves. He



said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Here are two objects of love, *thy neighbor* and *thyself* : and both call for the performance of such duties as are the proper expressions of the love required. God as much forbids us to do ourselves harm, as to do it to our neighbors ; and lays us under as real an obligation to seek our own good, as to seek the good of others. When Paul declares that the grace of God teaches us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world ; the duties of the first table are all comprised in living *godly*, and those of the second are divided into two classes, comprehended in living *soberly* and *righteously* ; the first relating to a proper government of ourselves, and the last to a consistent behavior towards our fellow men. The apostle James makes the same division of second table duties, when he says, "Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep *himself* unspotted from the world." By this we are taught, that pure religion leads to the performance of the duties we owe to our fellow men, and also of the duties we owe to ourselves.

The duties which we owe to others, are either those of relative life, or they are more general, extending to mankind at large. The angels, being spirits unclothed with flesh, were all created at once, having no mutual relation between them other than that of fellow creatures. In this respect, our circumstances widely differ from theirs. We, as *creatures*, have all one Father, even God : but as *men*, we have different fathers, and sustain a variety of relations ; and these relations bring with them their appropriate duties. The relations which subsist in a family are the most intimate, and the duties resulting from them are of unspeakable importance. But the duties we owe to our fellow men are not confined to our own family, our own neighborhood, or even our own country : they extend to the whole human race. "As we have therefore opportunity," said the apostle, "let us do good unto *all men*."

That part of holy practice which belongs to the second table of the law, naturally divides itself into three principal branches, namely, *general duties* ; or such as are due to mankind at large ; *relative duties* ; or such as grow out of the various relations that we sustain in life, especially those of the domestic circle ; and *personal duties* ; or such as every individual owes to himself. It is my purpose to treat of the duties pertaining to each of these three divisions ; and that in the same order in which they have now been placed.

## FIRST DIVISION.

### GENERAL DUTIES.

THERE are special duties which we owe to our own households, and others which we owe to the household of faith. And besides these, there are duties which we owe to our fellow men at large, irrespective of any particular relation they bear to us, or even to Christ. These it seems proper to denominate *general* duties. In works of mercy, the

Savior taught us to view every man as our neighbor, even when of a different nation, and of a different religion. See Luke x. 29—37. He required us not only to love our enemies, but to do them good. These are his words: "But I say unto you, Love your enemies—*do good* to them that hate you." In accordance with the requisition of the Master, one of his servants, who was moved by the Holy Ghost, said, "See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to *all men*."

All the duties which we owe to mankind, are comprised in doing them good according to our ability and opportunity; and in refraining from doing them any injury. Our fellow men may receive either benefit or injury from us, in relation to, I. Their *persons*; II. Their *property*; III. Their *reputation*; IV. Their *souls*.

I. Duty requires that we regard our neighbor's *person*.

We have animal, as well as intellectual natures; and considered as animals merely, we can receive either benefit or injury from each other's hands. The command, *Thou shalt not kill*, forbids us to destroy the animal life of our neighbor; and indeed it forbids us to offer him the least violence. To be no *striker*, is repeatedly mentioned as an essential requisite in a minister of the word of God. But why must a minister of the word be no striker? Because the thing itself is totally wrong. They who strike, and bruise, and mutilate, and murder their fellow men, are the devil's servants: "but the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men."

Parents, and others to whom God has committed authority, and who are his appointed instruments to execute wrath on evil doers, may inflict corporeal punishment; but in our individual capacity we have no such prerogative. The command of Christ is decisive, and is binding on all men, both within and without the pale of his church: "But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." Matt. v. 39. In the spirit of this command, Paul says to the saints at Rome, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Rom. xii. 19.

Although it is a plain dictate, not only of revealed but natural religion, that we should not destroy the lives of our fellow creatures, and that we should do violence to no man, it is nevertheless a melancholy fact, that a large portion of the human race go down to the dust by the hand of violence. Who can count the number that have been cut off by murders, assassinations, and wars? And whence come these wars and fightings among us? They come from our lusts—our selfishness, pride, covetousness, envy, anger, and revenge. As these lusts in the heart are all forbidden, so is their fruit. Let the religion of the Bible be fully adopted by all men as the rule of action, and there will not be another war declared, another battle fought, nor another man butchered by his fellow man. There is no one circumstance which gives such an aggravation to the sin of destroying men's lives, (considered merely in reference to *them*,) as this; that the destruction of their life is the termination of their only probationary state.

There are probably few things which will be more universally

acknowledged to be obligatory, than obedience to the sixth commandment. But this, as well as all the other commands of God, is exceedingly broad. It not only forbids taking away life, or doing aught that tends thereunto, but it requires all lawful endeavors to preserve life. There are many ways in which murder is committed. In some of them, the murderer seems as if he were unconscious of guilt. This is apparently the case with those who deal out death to their neighbor, in the shape of intoxicating drinks. Multitudes of lives are sacrificed on the altar of intemperance; and he who encourages the thing, is accessory to these murders. Nor is it enough that we can say, We did not give our neighbor drink; we did not put our bottle to him to make him drunken. Have we made an effort to take it away from him? Are we heartily seconding those redeeming measures, which God has so mercifully stirred up his friends to adopt, and that at a crisis when they were so greatly needed? The benevolence exhibited in the character of the good Samaritan, did not consist in his refraining from offering violence to the person of his fellow man. If this had been all, he would have differed in no respect from the priest and the Levite. His benevolence prompted him to pour oil and wine into wounds, which had been inflicted by other hands. Luke x. 30—37.

The custom that prevails, of inquiring after each other's health when we meet, seems to be a recognition of our obligation to regard the life and health of our fellow men. And were the law of love written deep in our hearts, this inquiry would be sincere; and we should be prepared to rejoice or be grieved, according to the favorable or unfavorable answer it should receive.

II. We owe duties to our fellow men in relation to their *property*.

God is the owner of all things. His supreme title to the earth—yea, and to the entire universe, he will never transfer to another: and yet it is said, "The earth hath he given to the children of men." While he has given the *whole* earth to the *whole* human race, he has, in his providence, ordained that there should be such a thing as *individual* property. It is his will that, by pre-occupancy or purchase, a certain piece of land should become yours, in distinction from its being your neighbor's; and that either by invention, fabrication, or some equivalent given, other commodities should be yours and not his.

The right of nations to their own territories, and of individuals to their own estates, is recognized by the law of the Supreme Ruler. To make our practice agree with the declarations of his will, we must respect every man's right to that which is his own. Very much of the consistency of our character, depends on a careful attention to this branch of Christian ethics. Two of the ten commandments are designed to bring into view our obligation to regard our neighbor's property. The right which one man, in distinction from another, has to a certain portion of property, is recognized both in the prohibition to steal, and to covet. The same moral law which forbids us to rob another of his life, forbids us to rob him of his money. And if a subjection to the will of God will prevent the one, it will prevent the other. Let us also remember, that the law of God as much forbids us to take away our neighbor's property by *fraud*, as by theft. Said our Savior, "Defraud not:" and by his apostle, he gave this caution to



the church at Thessalonica, and indeed to all others who should read the epistle addressed to them : " that no man should go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter." In Paul's epistle to the Romans, he said, " Provide things *honest* in the sight of all men." The honesty which we are required to practice in all our commercial dealings with mankind, lays us under obligation to pay attention to such things as the following :

1. That in buying and selling, we do not deceive one another, by overvaluing or undervaluing the articles of traffic. The seller is under temptation to deceive by overrating, and the buyer by underrating, their worth. " It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer." Prov. xx. 14.

2. The seller is under temptation to dishonesty, by wishing to obtain a greater price for his wares than he deems them really worth ; and the buyer may be guilty of equal dishonesty, by wishing to purchase them below their real value.

3. Honesty requires a punctual payment of debts. " Owe no man anything," is a precept that has the weight of divine authority. We have, in reality, no more right to withhold from our creditors that which is honestly due them, than we have to take, without permission, property of theirs not now in our possession. God requires us to pay all our debts, if it is in the power of our hand to do it ; and requires that we do it with punctuality. Punctuality is strikingly enforced by such a precept as we find, Deut. xxiv. 14, 15. With this compare Jam. v. 4. When the citizen of Zion sweareth to his own hurt, (particularly in matters relating to property,) he changeth not. Ps. xv. 4. It is one of the characteristics of a man of grace, that he is scrupulously exact in the fulfillment of his contracts.

4. A suitable regard to our neighbor's welfare, as it relates to his property, will prevent us from getting it into our hands by means of deceptive promises. The poor, as well as the rich, ought to feel themselves bound by their promises. They have no right to promise more than they have a reasonable prospect of being able to perform. If they say, " Unless we make such promises, we can not obtain those articles of which we stand in absolute need to sustain life," they must be told ; Duty requires you to act the honest part : instead therefore of making promises which you can not reasonably expect to fulfill, confess your poverty, and take the place of beggars instead of purchasers.

As another means of honest dealing with our neighbors, as well as of self-preservation, God requires *industry*. This is what the apostle proposes as a cure for theft : " Let him that stole, steal no more ; but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." Eph. iv. 28. Thieves might support themselves by honest labor, more easily than they do by stealing. Industry is proposed by the apostle as an antidote, not only to theft, but to a burdensome dependence, for support, on public and private charity. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, he exhorts the members of his church with quietness to work, and eat their own bread. He considers it a dishonest thing for any of them, through indolence, to live on the earnings of their industrious brethren. Very much of that failure in the fulfillment of pecuniary engagements,

which keeps society in a tumultuous state, and which is a real transgression of the divine law, has its source in *idleness*.

As a regard to our neighbor's *person*, will prevent us from ministering to his intemperate desires, so will a regard to his *property*. And if the intemperate man had a suitable regard to his neighbor's pecuniary interests, he would not, by his excesses, incapacitate himself to pay that neighbor his just dues. All men are apt to claim for themselves the virtue of honesty; but surely, they who are consuming on their intemperate lusts that money which they owe, have no right to call themselves honest men. Could the drunkard be made truly to feel his obligation to be honest, it would go far towards inducing him to become a temperate man.

While God has made it imperative on the debtor to use all honest means to discharge his contracts, he does not allow the creditor to oppress the debtor. If he sees that the debtor's incapacity to make good his engagements is real, and not pretended, he is bound to have patience with him: if he can not pay all that is due, to forgive a part; and if he can pay nothing, to forgive the whole debt. Such a treatment of the poor debtor, would help us to understand what is the most literal meaning of the petition, "*Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*" The richest creditor, in common with the poorest debtor, is such a bankrupt before God, that he needs to have his whole debt forgiven; and then to have all his future wants supplied from the stores of grace. And cases may sometimes occur among men, where the duty of the opulent creditor towards the indigent debtor, is not fully discharged even by forgiving him his whole debt: he may after this be under obligation, in common with others, to minister to his necessities with the hand of charity. Our common Parent requires that those of our brethren, who are destitute of property and the means of acquiring it, should not on this account be suffered to perish through lack of bread and the supports of life. His command is, "*Thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand from thy poor brother; but thou shalt open thy hand wide unto him.*" Though we have classed alms-giving with the duties which we owe to God, still, we can no more discharge all our obligations to our *fellow men*, without bestowing alms on such as are dependent, than we can do it without paying our honest debts.

There is another thing required of us, in regard to our neighbor's property, which I must not omit. From the pure word of God we learn, that it is not enough to refrain from taking away one's property by theft or fraud; or from keeping him out of it through the want of punctuality in our payments—we are required to restore to him what *he* has lost, and *we* have found. God has made it our duty to do this, even if the loser be our enemy. Let the reader look at the following statute in the laws of Moses: "*If thou meet thy enemy's ox or ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldst forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.*" Ex. xxiii. 4, 5. How holy and self-denying! Even the precepts of the New Testament are not any more so.

III. Another class of duties which we owe to our fellow men, relates to their *reputation*.

Reputation is as really valuable as property. "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold." "A good name is better than precious ointment." Prov. xxii. 1. Eccl. vii. 1. So we esteem it when it relates to ourselves, and so ought we to esteem it in relation to others. It is part of the duty we owe to our fellow men, to pay a proper regard to their reputation: and it is a part in which we are uncommonly liable to fail. The punishment which human laws inflict on the man who robs us of property, is more severe and ignominious than that which they visit upon him who robs us of character: indeed the latter most commonly receives no punishment at all. Were the penalty to be as severe, and as generally executed as the other, it would produce either a reform, or a great increase of prisons and penitentiaries.

The regard which we are required to show to the reputation of others, does not make it our duty to speak of men as though they were sinless, like the angels of light. We shall contradict the word of God, unless we freely acknowledge that we have all gone aside, and together become filthy. The scriptures give us no warrant to represent any unrenewed man as being influenced by disinterested motives. Nor do they authorize us to speak of the very best among the sanctified, as being wholly freed from selfish affections. It is not defaming the church of Christ to say, that it contains bad as well as good members—that it has false as well as true teachers; for the scripture says the same. But we have no right to tell which are the false teachers and the bad members, any further than their corrupt fruits make them known.

Though the unregenerate all possess unsanctified hearts, yet there is an observable difference among them, both in their sentiments and practice. Many of them are not only sound in their religious belief, but strict in their external regard to the duties of the second, and even the first table of the law. There are many of them whose word can be relied on—who are upright in their dealings—chaste and temperate in their habits—and who observe those ordinances of religion which belong to the outward court. These and similar traits of character, though they will not procure them an admission to heaven, are of no small consequence to them as members of society: and they have a right, as citizens, to all the advantage which can be derived from the correctness of their principles, and the regularity of their conduct.

If we cherish a proper regard to the reputation of our neighbors, it will have a manifest influence on our external practice.

1. It will prevent *slander*. Mephibosheth accused Ziba of making slanderous statements concerning him, with a design to destroy his character in the eyes of David. Had Ziba's story produced its intended effect, (as it did in part,) it would have proved ruinous to Mephibosheth's temporal prosperity. He relied on David's friendship for support and solace through life: and the slanderous story of his servant was calculated to deprive him of this friendship. The story told by Potiphar's wife concerning Joseph, is a striking example of sheer slander. It wickedly robbed him of a high reputation in the family where he lived. It imputed to him a character pre-eminently vile. It threw him into a prison, and loaded him with irons. The apostles



complained that they were slanderously reported, with regard to the doctrines they preached. The sentiments which their enemies represented them as advocating, their very souls abhorred. See Rom. iii. 8. It is the natural tendency of such slanders, to bring the doctrines of the gospel and the men who preach them, into disrepute; and thus to stop men's ears against the truth.

All slander, whether aimed at officers of the church, or of the state—the people of God, or the men of the world—is pointedly condemned in the word of God. Here is a sample of its precepts on this subject: “Thou shalt not raise a false report.” “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.” Ex. xxiii. 1; xx. 16. No matter if that neighbor be of a different nation from ourselves, or has a different religious creed—no matter if he be our personal and unrelenting enemy: we are as sacredly bound to refrain from wantonly injuring his reputation, as we are to keep from purloining his property, or doing violence to his person. David resolved to employ his authority to discountenance slander: “Whoso privily slandereth his neighbor, him will I cut off.” Ps. ci. 5. Solomon says, “He that uttereth a slander, is a fool.” There are few things a man can do, which are more decisive proof of his unregeneracy. Paul evinced his detestation of the vice in question, by making it one requisite in the character of bishops and deacons' wives, that they should be no slanderers. Tim. iii. 11.

2. A proper regard to our neighbor's reputation will restrain us from *circulating*, as well as from fabricating, a false report. It is represented to be the language of defamers, “Report, and we will report it”—make a story, and we will circulate it. But the man who is prepared to dwell in God's holy hill, is described as one who does not “take up a reproach against his neighbor.” Ps. xv. 3. “The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a back-biting tongue.” Were slanderers always to meet with frowns, instead of smiles, it would have a tendency to diminish their number. We have no right to give circulation to a report which is to our neighbor's disadvantage, merely because we have heard it. How do we know that it is not a slander? And whether the report be true or false, it does not become us to give it currency, nor even to make any mention of it; unless the circumstances of the case are such as render silence criminal. This will lead me to remark,

3. That a due regard to the reputation of our neighbor will, in ordinary cases, prevent us from reporting that evil concerning him which we believe to be a fact, or even that which we have seen with our own eyes. I say in ordinary cases; since cases may exist where duty will compel us to make a disclosure. Were the principle to be universally adopted, that we are bound to conceal all the errors of our fellow men, it would issue in the entire prostration of law, and in the triumph of the guilty over the innocent. Under certain circumstances, we are as much bound to testify *against* our neighbor, as we under all circumstances are, *not* to bear *false* witness against him. “Put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.” “A true witness delivereth souls.” But it may sometimes happen, that the innocent can not be delivered without disclosing the crimes of the guilty. We cease to be under obligation to conceal the crimes of individuals, when such

concealment will endanger the public safety. When we have satisfactory evidence that certain citizens are wickedly plotting the ruin of the state, we ought not, out of regard to their reputation, to refrain from disclosing their plots. No tenderness for the character of Absalom, should have restrained any one from disclosing his conspiracy against his father's government. It was not criminal, nor inconsistent with the duty we are considering, for Johanan to acquaint Gedaliah with the imminent danger he was in from the treacherous Ishmael :—information, the disregard of which cost Gedaliah his life ; and was also the means of dispersing that remnant of the Jews, which the king of Babylon had left in the land.

As, in matters pertaining to civil government, we should feel more anxious to preserve order, than to hide the faults and preserve the reputation of particular men, so should it be in the church of Christ. A regard to the interests of this holy community may require that the character of individual members should be exposed. Paul, in his epistles, not only specified heretical doctrines, but heretical men. When he had pointed out a certain heretical doctrine which did eat like a canker, he proceeded to give information that *Hymeneus* and *Philetus* were its propagators. 2 Tim. ii. 17. This he did, not from any ill will to these men, but to prevent their doing mischief. In one of his epistles to Timothy, he made mention of the evil which had been done him by Alexander the coppersmith ; yet we ought not to think that his object was to malign Alexander, but rather to put Timothy on his guard against so dangerous a man. In every period, and in almost every place, are to be found men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the truth ; against whose pernicious ways it seems a duty to give warning, and especially to the rising generation. And some there are who are sunk so low in vice, that they can hardly be said to have any reputation for us to be tender of : yet even these must not be slandered, nor wantonly reproached. Except in those cases where the character of our neighbor is forfeited, and where, moreover, the public good requires that his crimes should be disclosed, we have no right to report the evil which we know of him. When no good end can be answered by our speaking of his faults, we are not permitted to do it. All have their faults ; and nothing more than our actual defects need to be talked of and dwelt upon, in this uncharitable and unforgiving world, to render the most of us objects of dislike and contempt. The apostle Peter exhorts that we lay aside *all* evil speaking : and this he does immediately after exhorting us to lay aside *envies*. The connection between envy and evil-speaking is very intimate. Christians are under strong obligation to avoid speaking evil of each other : "Speak not evil one of another, brethren." James iv. 11. Nor are they required to observe this rule in regard to their brethren only—the rule extends to mankind in general. Paul charges Titus to put them in mind to *speak evil of none*. Titus iii. 1, 2.

God not only allows us, but makes it our duty, privately to remind our neighbor of his faults, even when they are not glaring ; but he requires it should be done in a friendly spirit, and with a view, not to mortify his feelings, but to improve his character. This emphatic precept is found among the laws of Moses : "Thou shalt in anywise

rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him." Lev. xix. 17. But to the practice so extensively prevalent in this unfriendly world, of proclaiming one's faults behind his back, just to entertain the company, or to build our own reputation on the ruins of his, the scripture has given the forbidding appellation of *backbiting*. In the first chapter of Romans, "backbiters and haters of God" are classed together. In the fifteenth Psalm, the citizen of Zion is characterized as one that backbiteth not with his tongue. We read of whisperers who separate very friends, and of those who carry tales to shed blood; yea, of those who go *up and down* as tale-bearers among the people where they live. But this is as much forbidden as theft or murder: "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people." Lev. xix. 16. This prohibition seems to suppose, that there are those who make a kind of trade of tale-bearing: but it is a miserable occupation. The state of society would be greatly improved, were those men and women who pursue this business purged out; or, what is more desirable, were they transformed by the renewing of their mind. How very expressive is that proverb, "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no tale-bearer, the strife ceaseth." Prov. xxvi. 20. From the concise view which has been taken of this subject, we can not but perceive that the God of the Bible greatly abhors the evil speaker. He must therefore approve of that petition which is found in one of the Psalms: "Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth."

IV. We owe duties to our fellow men in relation to their *souls*.

Men have *immortal souls*. This is that which gives them all their consequence. The beasts have bodies; they have animal senses and appetites in common with us; but when they die they perish: for the spirit of a beast goeth downward to the earth, but the spirit of man goeth upward. It returns to God who gave it, to meet his smiles or frowns, according to the character it shall have formed here; and this character it will retain through interminable ages. Man's soul is not only immortal, but its faculties are susceptible of endless expansion.

By reason of the fall of our first parents, we all come into the world in a state of depravity and condemnation. But through the interposition of the Son of God, we are put into a state of merciful probation; a probation, however, which will terminate with this short life. This is designed as a space for repentance. It is a time when we may escape from the pollution of the world, and be delivered from the wrath to come. But the danger that our space of repentance will be filled up with perseverance in sin, and that we shall not be delivered from the wrath to come, is very great: "For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." If men lose their souls, they lose their all. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" What will it profit a man that he has had a healthful body, a large estate, and a high reputation, when he shall have lost his soul?

But some one may say, "What have I to do with another's soul? Am I my brother's keeper?" It would be strange indeed, were we



required to regard our neighbor's welfare in relation to his person, his property, and his good name, and yet were allowed to feel indifferent about his undying soul, and his blessedness in eternity. Can the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself;" be truly obeyed, if our concern for him be limited to those interests of his which end with this life? Do but contrast them with the things which relate to the life to come, and you must be convinced, that love to your neighbor will lead you almost to forget the former, in comparison with the latter. We are not, however, left to mere inferential reasoning on this subject; though in this case it would be conclusive. God has required that we concern ourselves about each other's salvation. How explicit is that injunction, Heb. xii. 15; "Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God." By this we are all laid under obligation to see to it, that not a single soul be lost through our neglect. The command given us to rebuke our neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him, clearly implies that it is our duty to seek the salvation of his soul. Nor is the will of God concerning this point less unequivocally made known, by that declaration with which the apostle James closes his epistle: "Let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." Christ did not feel indifferent towards our bodily wants; but it was to save our *souls* that he died: and his example in making this his chief concern, has all the authority of a command to enforce on us the duty of caring for one another's souls.

It is possible there may be some who think, that *seeking the salvation of souls* is a duty obligatory on none but those who are within the pale of the church. This, we acknowledge, is work which the members of this spiritual community have explicitly engaged to do, and which they must do, unless they would forfeit their character as the followers of the Lamb. But why shall this obligation be restricted to them? Why might we not with equal propriety say, It is Christians, and they alone, who are under obligation to regard the persons, property, and reputation of their fellow men? If others are bound to perform those duties which relate to these minor interests of their fellow men, how can they be released from obligation to care for their souls? We may rest assured that they are not released. No man, let him be an ecclesiastic or a civilian, a believer or an infidel, has any right to feel indifferent concerning the souls of his fellow men.

But what, it may be asked, can we do to benefit their souls?

1. It is our duty to present such an *example* before them as is calculated to help, and not hinder their salvation. If we ourselves walk in the broad way that leads to death, we can not be said to manifest a suitable concern for the salvation of our fellow men; (to say nothing concerning the neglect of our own;) for in this case, the influence of our example is on the wrong side. That caution, "Thou shalt not follow the multitude to do evil," supposes there is danger the multitude will be followed in doing evil. It behooves us to see to it, that we do not belong to that evil-doing multitude. A due regard for the salvation of our fellow men, will induce us to exemplify that piety which we wish them to possess; and the more intense our concern for them, the more careful shall we be to have our example worthy of

imitation. The influence which our example is calculated to exert on the character and everlasting interests of our fellow men, furnishes a stronger motive to stimulate a benevolent heart to acquire and preserve an unsullied reputation, than all the applause which such a reputation might draw after it. How desirable to be the salt of the earth, that shall preserve it from moral putrefaction. How great the privilege to be the light of the world, even in such a subordinate sense as imperfect men may be its light. "Let your light so shine before men," said Jesus to his disciples, "that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." How forcibly does this speak in favor of the benign influence of good works, as means of the conversion of the world. The apostle had the same thing in his eye, when he exhorted the Christians at Philippi to be blameless and harmless, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation; among whom, he told them, they shone as lights in the world.

If our example has been on the side of error, irreligion, or neglect of the great salvation, a regard to the good of men's souls will excite us to take these stumbling blocks out of the way, lest some of our fellow men should thereby be prevented from walking in the path of life. Had we thrown obstructions across a road, and thus prevented travelers from pursuing their journey, duty would urge the immediate removal of such obstructions. And what if we have thrown similar obstructions across the highway of holiness? Shall we not be in equal haste to remove them, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way—lest they should prove the means of diminishing the number of travelers to that city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God?

2. We may promote the spiritual interests of our fellow men, by affording them, either personally, or by other means, that *wholesome instruction* which will tend to bring about their salvation. "That the soul be without knowledge, is not good." It is, however, by knowing *the truth*, and not by mere human knowledge, that we are made free. John viii. 32. The redeemed are chosen to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. 2 Thess. ii. 13. If, then, we value the salvation of men, we shall long to acquaint them with the truth as it is in Jesus. No man who receives the Bible as a divine revelation, can pretend that he loves the souls of his fellow men, unless it be his unfeigned desire that they should enjoy this book. Nor can he attentively read the Bible without perceiving, that the ministry of the word is a divine appointment, and one of great importance to the salvation of men: if, therefore, he greatly desires that they may be saved, he will be proportionably anxious that they may be favored with the preached gospel. And this anxiety will influence him to be at great pains and expense to help furnish them with it, and with the other means of grace. If a proper regard to men's lives, would impel us to furnish supplies to those who must inevitably famish without them; what must be the result of a proper regard to their salvation? Must it not move the Christian nations to rise, as one man, and make a mighty effort to acquaint the residue of men with the holy scriptures, which are able to make them wise unto salvation? Were our benevolent concern for them such as it should be, we should greatly enlarge

our efforts to multiply translations and copies of the Bible, and to instruct such as are ignorant of letters, so that every child of Adam might be able to read in his own tongue, the things which concern his salvation. We should also send forth a great company of apostolic men to expound the word of God, and publish the glad tidings of salvation. And were Christendom once awake to the claims of those gentile nations which yet remain unevangelized, she surely could not long forget the children of Abraham. We obtained mercy and covenant privileges through their unbelief. How thankful ought we to be, that it is not through our unbelief that they are to be restored; but rather through our mercy that they are to obtain mercy. God has not made it necessary that we should become dry branches and be broken off, to prepare the way for them to be grafted in again. On the contrary, our increasing verdure and fruitfulness will prepare the way for that joyful event; an event which will be as life from the dead. Rom, xi. 31.

They who love the souls of men, find much, even in Christian countries, to excite their compassion. They do not consider men to be in circumstances of safety, merely because they live in a land of Bibles and sabbaths. They remember the woes which Christ denounced on those cities where he did most of his mighty works, because they repented not. Christian countries, according to the prediction of an apostle, have their damnable heresies. They have the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge. *Instruction* it is called, and much of it comes from pulpits; but its influence on the cause of religion is most deadly. That compassion for souls which is the fruit of the Spirit, is quite a different thing from sectarian zeal and proselytism. This strives hard to convert all men to its own peculiar sentiments and practices, with a view to give consequence to itself; but that, while it is not indifferent as to outward forms, and especially as to sentiments, is wont to put forth its great strength in seeking to effect a radical change in men's *hearts*; so that they may be prepared both to please and enjoy the blessed God.

Every individual is capable of doing very much to promote the cause of truth and righteousness among men, by a discreet use of his tongue. The tongue is said to be an unruly evil, full of deadly poison; but it is also called our glory;\* and well it may be; since by means of it we can articulate the name, and declare the attributes of the Creator, which the rest of the creation can but silently express. *Therewith*, says the apostle, *bless we God*. And with this agree the words of the Psalmist: "All thy works praise thee, O Lord, and thy saints *bless* thee. They *speak* of the glory of thy kingdom, and *talk* of thy power; to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom." By means of the tongue, we can interpret what God has made known of his wisdom, power, and goodness, in his works and in his word. This, it is true, is the *official* work of the ministers of religion, to whom it belongs to preach the word. But to speak of the glory of God's kingdom, and talk of his power, even with a view to make known his mighty acts, is a duty incumbent on all

\* Ps. xvi. 9, compared with Acts ii, 26,



men; and one which seems to be expected from all good men. This may be learned from the following inspired proverbs which relate to the subject. "The tongue of the just is as choice silver." "The tongue of the wise is health." "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright." "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life." "The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life." In this last proverb we are taught, that as a well continually sends forth refreshing waters, so does the mouth of the righteous send forth edifying words. The virtuous woman is represented as opening her mouth in wisdom, while in her tongue is the law of kindness. In her appropriate sphere of action, she can advantageously employ her tongue to subserve the best of causes; especially among her children and domestics. Prov. x. 20; xii. 18; xv. 2, 4; x. 11; xxxi. 26.

It may be thought that religious conversation hardly belongs to the duties of the second table. It was a matter of some doubt in my own mind, what classification to give it. Like some others, it seems to be a duty which we owe both to God and men. The scriptures do not make such an entire distinction between the duties of the first and second tables, as to allow us to forget God in the performance of the latter. "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." In prayer and praise, we address ourselves immediately to God; but in conversation, even when it is concerning the Divine Being, we address ourselves directly to our fellow men, with a view to their improvement in knowledge and piety.

Some would never have the subject of religion introduced into common discourse. Such persons would assign this practice no place among the duties of either table of the law; at least, they would be far from considering it as a duty binding on all. But I see not how any class of men can be released from its performance. All who have the faculty of speech, use it in some way. Is it reasonable that the things of the kingdom of God, which are of such paramount importance, should be the only things that are excluded from a place in conversation? It is plainly our duty to use every possible effort to promote the edification of good men, and the conversion of the wicked. And what kind of discourse is best adapted to effect this two-fold object? What kind of discourse did Paul recommend to the Colossians, when he said, "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt?" To the Ephesians he also writes, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." How evidently do these passages enjoin religious conversation; and that for the important purpose of promoting our own spiritual improvement, and that of those with whom we have intercourse. They who have known, by experience, the benefit which Christians derive from mutual discourse on religious subjects; and who have perceived the happy influence that their pious remarks have often had, in arresting the attention of their impenitent friends; will be constrained to acknowledge that "the lips of the righteous feed many." Until the time arrives when all shall know the Lord, the scriptures speak of it as a duty binding on every man, to teach his neighbor and his brother the knowledge of God, Jer, xxxi, 34.

It has been said that *talk* is nothing but the *leaves* of the tree—that it can not properly be ranked with *fruit*. A remark of this kind is found in Mr. Edwards' book on Religious Affections. In making it, however, he merely designed to illustrate the small degree of evidence which is derived from hearing the relation of a fair experience, in comparison to that which is derived from seeing religion exemplified in a holy life. The first would be nothing but *leaves*, while the other is *fruit*. But pious discourse which is designed for the honor of God and the edification of those who hear, is one ingredient in a holy life; and is among the evidences of a renovation of heart. It was manifestly so considered by the Savior. He says, "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh. A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Matt. xii. 33—37.

3. A proper concern for the souls of our fellow men, will lead us to make *intercession* for them. This is one suitable way of evincing concern for their bodies and temporal interests; but it is more imperiously called for in relation to the interests of the life to come. If it be our heart's desire that men may be saved, it will also be our prayer to God. Rom. x. 1. The ambassadors of Christ are to give themselves to *prayer*, as well as to the ministry of the word. Acts vi. 4. Sin has fast closed the hearts of men against those offers of mercy, which these ambassadors are commissioned to present in the name of their Master. It is needful that the offers be made; but our ultimate dependence for success is on the special influences of the Holy Spirit; and these are to be expected only in answer to prayer. The duty of praying for the conversion of sinners, is not restricted to those who preach the word. As all are under obligation to regard the best interests of their fellow men, they can not be released from the duty of making intercession for them. "I exhort therefore," said the apostle, "that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men." As compassion moved the neighbors of the man who had the palsy, to take him on their shoulders and carry him to the feet of Jesus for a cure, so will it influence every sincere Christian to take, in the arms of prayer, the unregenerate—those whom sin has rendered spiritual paralytics,—and carry them to the same skillful Physician, in the hope that their souls may live.

A suitable concern for the souls of our fellow men, will stimulate us to pray, not only that they may be saved, but that, as one important means of promoting their salvation, we may be enabled to set them a holy example; and that the light of the whole church may become brighter, and more influential in dissipating the moral darkness with which sin has enveloped our world. Such a concern will prompt us to ask it as a privilege, that, either by word or action, we may be made the instruments of saving good to our fellow men. Compassion

for souls will lead us to pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth more laborers into his harvest; and to intercede for those who are already in the field, that they may be furnished with the spirit of their office, and have their labors crowned with glorious success. It will also lead us to pray that blind guides, who so pervert the gospel as to endanger the souls of their hearers, may either have their eyes opened, or their mouths stopped. If our love to the souls of men be sincere, it will be universal; and since prayer can traverse the globe without restraint, we shall embrace the whole human family in our petitions. It will be our prayer that all men may come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved.

#### THE DIVISION HARMONIZED.

We have seen that the duties we owe to our fellow men at large, relate to their persons, property, reputation, and souls; and that we are required to do them no harm in either of these particulars, but on the contrary, good. That there is an entire harmony between these several subdivisions of general duties, needs no demonstration. Had we been forbidden to injure our fellow men in some one, or more, of the particulars named, but allowed to do it in the rest,—had not the prohibition extended to each and all of them: then indeed would the supreme Lawgiver have been chargeable with inconsistency. But now all is harmonious: we are forbidden to injure our neighbor in any respect whatever. We may do him no injury in his person; for we are not allowed to destroy his life, or to do anything which shall tend to impair his health. We may not steal his property, or in any way deprive him of it. We may not rob him of his reputation, either by inventing or circulating a false report; or even by recounting his real faults, unless compelled to do it by a regard to the public weal. Nor does the word of God allow us to throw the least impediment in the way of his salvation. Neither is our duty to our neighbor fully discharged, merely by refraining from doing him wrong. We are under obligation to protect his life, and, as far as in us lies, to promote his health and comfort; to guard him against pecuniary losses, and restore any lost property of his which we may have found; and also to defend his character, so far as we can do it in consistency with truth. Nor is our obligation in relation to his spiritual interests, all comprised in simply doing nothing to hinder his salvation: it is our duty to make great exertions to promote it.

As these branches of holy practice are in harmony with each other, so do they manifestly accord with the whole system of divine truth. The law is all comprehended in love to God and our neighbor. Our love to God is manifested in the duties of godliness; which have been already considered. Our love to our neighbor is more directly manifested in refraining from doing injury to him, and in doing him good; that is, in acts of uprightness and beneficence. But without *these*, we should give no evidence of love to God; nor should we, without *those*, exhibit any scriptural evidence of love to our neighbor. There is a perfect harmony between godliness and morality—between piety to-



wards God, and good works to men. But between piety and immorality, there is no agreement at all.

I need not particularize all the preceding Articles of Christian *doctrine* and *experience*, for the purpose of showing that this Division of second table duties harmonizes with them. Let it suffice that I show its agreement with *benevolence*; the *first* Article of Christian experience, and that which lies at the foundation of all the rest. Benevolence is good will, universal good will. It regards the well-being of the whole intelligent universe, ascending to the highest part, and stooping to the lowest. It desires for itself and for all others, *holiness*, as the most perfect *character*; and *happiness*, as the most perfect *state* of intelligent beings: and is never reconciled to the existence of sin and misery in a single case, only in view of its being necessary to promote general good.

This is that love which is the fulfilling of the law. Let it be shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, and it will work no ill to its neighbor. A benevolent heart will make benevolent hands, and feet, and tongues. If we *love* our neighbor, we shall injure neither his person, property, reputation, nor soul. Love will not only restrain us from inflicting wounds, but will prompt us to bind up those which others have inflicted: for, in the story of the man who fell among thieves, it is manifestly the design of our Savior to make it appear, that not only the thieves who robbed and wounded him, but also the priest and Levite who without pity passed him by, were destitute of any true love to their neighbor. If we love our neighbor as ourself, we shall neither rob nor defraud him; but be as willing to give him his due, as to have him give us ours. And how certain it is that love to our neighbor will preserve us from slandering him, or feasting ourselves on his foibles and imperfections. A spirit of benevolence will make us tender of his character, as we should wish him to be tender of ours. Love will not prevent us from reproving him; it will even prompt us to do it: but its tendency is to do away that evil-speaking and backbiting, which now so greatly abound in the world, and even in the church itself.

Love to souls is not a mere exercise of the heart: it is an operative principle, flowing out into benevolent actions. It was love to the souls of men, which made the Father willing to give his Son to die for them. This it was that induced the Son to lay down his life for their redemption: and this moves the Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify them. Love to the souls of men, makes the holy angels cheerful in becoming ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation. This prompted the apostles to endure great privations. "Therefore," said Paul, "I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory." And when any one has tasted that the Lord is gracious, and has come under the influence of Christian benevolence, he begins to think of the souls of his fellow men. There needs nothing but the prevalence of such a principle, to stimulate us to make great and self-denying exertions to turn men from the power of Satan unto God. They who are under the power of Satan, possess a wicked, unlovely character. They are susceptible of a moral change, which would be infinitely to their advantage. Now, the wrath of God abideth on them; but they may yet enjoy his favor.

Their present course leads to destruction ; but they may be turned into the way of life. How can a benevolent heart behold them in this state of guilt and peril, and neglect to use means for their conversion ? If we neglect to use those means which God allows, and even requires us to use, how can we pretend that we love them ? We have no love at all to our fellow men, if we do not love their *souls* ; and we can have no love to their souls, unless we wish them to be saved ; for without salvation, it had been good for them if they had had no souls. And how can we say we desire their souls' salvation, and yet make no effort to bring about so desirable a result ?

## REMARKS.

1. If we have obligations which extend to our fellow men at large, then every thing like indifference to their interests must be wicked ; for its tendency is to render us neglectful of our duty towards them. Why did the priest and the Levite pass by, and neglect to minister to the wants of the man who fell among thieves ? It was not because they bore him a grudge ; for he was a stranger : but because they took no interest in his happiness. It is wicked to feel an indifference about the happiness of a single individual of the human race, let his religion, color, language, or rank in society, be what it may. In every man we meet, we should recognize a brother of the human family, to whom we owe some duty—this, if no other ; to ask our common Father to bless him. What are the duties we owe to our fellow men ?—should be a matter of frequent inquiry, whether we are at home or abroad—whether we are in our own or in a foreign land. To serve one's self, is but a contemptible object for which to live ; but to serve our generation according to the will of God, is noble, and worthy of our highest emulation. Without being moved by pride, we may desire to exert a healthful influence, and one which shall be felt to the ends of the world.

2. Do we owe duties to the whole race of men ? Then how much more noble is an exploring expedition, whose object is to learn the moral necessities of our fellow men with a view to relieve them, than one whose object is merely to enrich the archives of literature. We do not say the latter object is of no importance, but in comparison with the other, it is trifling indeed. Of what importance is it to ascertain the spot where the Niger heads or empties, in comparison to ascertaining whether we have fellow sinners there, who need to receive at our hands the bread of life ? Of what consequence is it to discover a new island, or even a new continent, for the sake of annexing it to the map of the globe, or extending our commerce, to what it is to make the same discovery for the sake of sending its inhabitants the news of the great salvation ? With a heart enlarged with benevolent concern for our fellow men, we have a new motive for increasing our geographical knowledge. While scholars read to gratify their curiosity, Christians will read to learn their duty. When they find what multitudes of their fellow men are sitting in darkness and the region of the shadow of death, they perceive their field of labor is very extensive, and that the calls for occupying it, are very urgent.

## SECOND DIVISION.

## RELATIVE DUTIES.

By *relative* duties, are meant those which arise from the particular *relations* which exist in society. The more important duties of the social state, will be brought into view under several distinct heads. Let us consider,

I. *The duties of Rulers and Citizens.*—Rulers and their subjects, or magistrates and the people, have an important relation subsisting between them ; and this relation brings with it reciprocal duties.—That both magistrates and people should understand and discharge their respective duties, is essential to their own excellence of character, and to the harmony and well being of civil government. A ruler can not be at the same time a *good man*, and a *wicked magistrate* : nor can any private citizen be a good member of the church, and a bad member of the state.

The word of God acknowledges the existence of human government ; and, without deciding what shall be its particular form, declares it to be a divine ordinance. Rom. xiii. 1. Rulers are either *legislative* or *executive*, according as they are employed in enacting or executing the laws. Whatever may be their particular designation, they are all considered as ministers of God to the people for good.—Under the supreme Ruler, they are to serve their fellow citizens by preserving order and public tranquillity. They are to be His revengers to execute wrath upon evil doers. Since earthly rulers, even of the highest grade, are wholly subordinate and accountable to the supreme Potentate, there must be a manifest impropriety in their enacting laws that shall contravene those which He has already enacted. From whom can they have derived their right to make such laws ? Certainly, God has given them no such right ; and besides Him, there is none other in heaven or on earth, who can authorize them to do it. The people who entrust them with power, are unable to confer on them any such prerogative ; for they do not possess it themselves.—Civil rulers can not make a more dreadful mistake, than to require those who are subject to their authority to disregard the acknowledged laws of God. That saying is as much in accordance with reason, as with scripture : “ He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.” 2 Sam. xxiii. 3. It is not enough that he should be in the fear of God as a private individual ; he must be so as a *ruler*—“ *ruling* in the fear of God.” Were it not so, there would be a perplexing discordance between his obligation as a man, and as a ruler. That magistrate who does not feel himself solemnly bound to regard the glory of God in his *official*, as well as in his private capacity, has no right to conclude that he regards it all : of him it can not be said, that he “ ruleth in the fear of God.”

Some may think this representation confounds the difference between civil and ecclesiastical rulers. This, however, is not the case. Let civil rulers confine their attention to the government of the state, and



ecclesiastical rulers theirs, to the government of the church ; but let both rule in the fear of God. In thus doing, they will be mutual helps to each other. Let civil magistrates rule thus, and, without departing from their own sphere, they will be to the church what the prophet terms her "nursing fathers." Isa. xlix. 23. Civil rulers ought not to be ignorant of the fact, that the church is that kingdom which the God of heaven has set up to bless the world, and to bring glory to his own great name. The prosperity of the church involves the prosperity of the state ; for civil government will be administered with great ease, when true religion shall so prevail as to bring the people at large under its purifying influence.

Rulers, from the lowest to the highest, not excepting crowned heads, are under obligation to give a *personal attention* to the duties of their office. The argument by which the apostle urges the duty of paying them tribute, is this ; that "they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing." If magistrates were to assume their office in the spirit of God's word, they would do it, not for the sake of its honor or emolument—not for the sake of being ministered to ; but rather for the sake of ministering, and being useful to their fellow men. They are pointedly forbidden to be haughty, overbearing, and oppressive. Were the oracles of God to form the character of such as rule over men, I will not say there could be no kings ; but one thing is clear, there could be no *tyrants*. The *four* particulars in which, under the preceding Division, it was shown that we may benefit or injure our fellow men, will all claim the attention of civil rulers. They are under obligation, according to the degree of authority with which they are clothed, to exert themselves to preserve the lives, property, and reputation, of those with whose concerns they are entrusted. Nor are they to overlook the interests of the mind and soul ; but are to foster education, and all those means of moral culture which are calculated to raise man from ignorance, vice, and misery, to knowledge, virtue, and blessedness. They have no liberty to disregard the rights of conscience, nor to make light of those concerns of their constituents, which reach into eternity.\*

The duties of magistrates necessarily suppose corresponding duties in *the people*. The more important of these, will be exhibited under the five following heads ;

1. *Respectful treatment* is due to men in authority ; and, other things being equal, it is to be proportioned to the degree of their elevation. "Honor the king." "It is written, thou shalt not speak evil

\* Why is it not suitable and praiseworthy, for civil rulers to discourage intemperance and other vices ; and that, too, out of a professed regard to men's eternal, as well as temporal interests ? Who will say it is not proper they should provide chaplains for their armies and navies ; (so long as armies and navies are in use ; ) assigning this as a principal reason, that they believe soldiers and sailors have *souls* ? Since these men are almost wholly excluded from enjoying gospel privileges and the ordinary means of grace, is it not the bounden duty of the government they serve, to furnish them that religious instruction without which, there is but little hope they will be saved from everlasting ruin ? Do civil rulers meddle with a thing which does not belong to them, when they provide religious instruction for their prisons, penitentiaries, and lazarettos ? And what enlightened and rectified mind is not delighted to hear the judge, in delivering his charge to the jury, and his sentence of condemnation to criminals, recognize man as an immortal being, accountable to a higher and more solemn tribunal than his ?

of the ruler of thy people." By their official station, our rulers are the elders of the land and the fathers of the country ; they therefore claim the respect which the scriptures require from youth to the aged, and from children to their parents.

2. *Obedience* is due to the laws which they enact, or are appointed to enforce, even though, in many instances, we do not view them as wisely framed ; provided, however, they be not repugnant to the laws of God. "Put them in mind," said Paul in his epistle to Titus, "to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates." Subjection ought not to be a mere matter of expediency and self-interest ; it should be a matter of conscience. "Wherefore," said the apostle to the Romans, "ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for *conscience* sake." Indeed, the whole community, not even excepting those who are appointed to frame and execute the laws, are under obligation to submit themselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake. The supreme Ruler, who says to his subjects, "Be ye holy," as an excitement to their obedience, is able to add, "for I the Lord your God am holy."

3. We are not only under obligation to obey the laws ourselves, but to *encourage obedience in others*, and to contribute our influence in quelling a seditious spirit. Here is one place where that saying of the Savior will apply ; "Blessed are the peace-makers." It is a duty we owe to the magistrates and to the public, to lend our aid in detecting criminals and bringing them to justice.

4. Rulers have a claim to *pecuniary reward* for their public services. "Render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's." "Render therefore to all their dues : tribute to whom tribute ; custom to whom custom."

5. Another duty the people owe to their magistrates, is to *intercede* for them. The kings of Persia requested this favor of those captive Jews, whom they released and sent back to Jerusalem. David mentions it as one of the privileges that Solomon (who was to succeed him on the throne of Israel) would enjoy, that *prayer* would be made for him continually. Paul, in his first epistle to Timothy, exhorts that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, should be made for kings and for all in authority, that we might lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. They who are in authority, have a special claim to be remembered in our prayers, for such reasons as these : Their post is difficult, and they need to be endowed with wisdom, integrity, and a deep sense of their responsibility to God.—They need a blessing on their measures, let them be ever so wisely adopted and well pursued.—And lastly, their elevated station greatly exposes them to forget God, neglect the great salvation, and lose their souls.

II. *The duties of Instructors and Pupils.*—In all civilized nations, there is such a relation as that of *instructor* and *pupil*. The scriptures do not say much on this subject, but they manifestly recognize the existence of such a relation. The apostle had allusion to it, when he spoke of the law as resembling a *schoolmaster* in bringing us to Christ. In the days of David, we read of the *teacher* and *scholar*, in reference

to sacred music ; and the prophet Malachi speaks of the *master* and the *scholar*. In these days when the arts and sciences are so extensively cultivated, the relation of master and scholar constitutes one of the most important bonds of union by which society is held together. It is a most interesting relation ; since it exists between that portion of the race who are now in the training age, and those individuals who are employed by their parents to direct their education, and form their minds for acting their various parts on the stage of life. A relation having such an intimate connection with the well being of the present and future life, I could not pass over in this attempt to give a sketch of relative duties.

As to *instructors*, they are under solemn obligation to be something more than *hirelings*. If faithful, they are a class of laborers who are worthy of their hire ; but to obtain this, should not be their chief end. The command, to “do good to all as we have opportunity,” should be deeply felt by those who are entrusted with the education of children. They have opportunity to do good to a very interesting portion of society—a portion whose tender age renders them peculiarly susceptible of improvement. The principal duties resulting from the relation which instructors sustain, are the following :

1. It is their incumbent duty to thoroughly acquaint themselves with those branches of science which they undertake to teach. What they do not understand themselves, they are not prepared to teach their pupils. To teach any science to advantage, it must be *familiar* to their own minds.

2. It is the duty of instructors to do their utmost to *increase the knowledge* of their pupils, and thus to prove a real benefit to them. A good instructor will not be contented with superficialness in his pupil. He will therefore be more solicitous to enlarge his understanding, than to crowd his memory—to teach him how to think for himself, than merely to tell him what have been the thoughts and opinions of other men.

3. The exercise of *government* is a necessary appendage of instruction. Schools can not be taught to any advantage, unless they are governed ; and the government of a school necessarily devolves on its teacher. School government should be of a decided and impartial character ; and yet it should be mild, persuasive, and paternal.

4. I can not think that those who are employed in the instruction of youth, have discharged all their duty to God and their pupils, when they have taught the latter nothing but human science. To fathers it is said, “Provoke not your children to wrath, *but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*” This duty is not limited to fathers and mothers : it also devolves on those to whom they have entrusted the education of their children. “But what if the father objects to having the instructor include ‘the nurture of the Lord’ in the education of his child ?” My answer is, that instructors have no right to neglect their duty, because fathers neglect theirs. And if fathers are unwilling to patronize teachers, unless they will consent to say nothing to their pupils on religious subjects, let them seek other men.

An instructor might consent to be silent on points of mere sectarian



difference, but can he, consistently with a regard to the best interests of his pupils, consent to give them no instruction on such momentous subjects as the existence, character, and government of God, the truth of his word, the ruined condition of man, the glorious provision made for his recovery, and the certain connection between our conduct in this world, and our condition in that which is to come? Every instructor, from the president of a college down to the teacher of a district school, is under obligation to pray *for* his pupils, and to pray *with* them. He is also bound to present before them the attraction of a uniformly amiable example, and to exert all his influence to lure them into the paths of piety. Should he neglect to do these things, how can he, with any pleasure, anticipate the meeting which he must have with them before the bar of God? And now with the judgment-seat in prospect, let this case of conscience be decided—Is it consistent, with the consent, and even at the request of parents, to become instructors of their children in things of an irreligious and demoralizing tendency? Would it be right to butcher their children, even if the parents would hire us to do it? And is it not equally wrong to be hired to destroy their morals, and help fit them for eternal woe?

The duties of *pupils*. These correspond to the duties of their instructors. Pupils ought, as a matter of conscience, to submit to scholastic discipline. The command which requires children to obey their parents, virtually requires scholars to be subject to their teachers: and the apostle speaks of *tutors* as being also *governors*. Gal. iv. 2. Scholars are under a moral obligation to endeavor to sustain the authority of their instructors, both by their own example, and by discountenancing a spirit of insubordination among their companions.\* Instructors who faithfully discharge the duties of their office, may claim a kind of filial reverence from their pupils.

Another of the duties of a scholar, is *studiousness*. The scholar is put to school in order to *learn*. But he can not learn unless he will study. We must *incline the ear* and *apply the heart*, if we would acquire knowledge, whether divine or human. A close attention to study is a duty which the pupil owes to himself, to his parents, to his instructor, to his country, and, I may add, to his Creator. And every scholar is under obligation to encourage studious habits among his fellows. I would here remark, that while many err in not studying enough, there are some who study too much. Duty does not require a youth to break down his constitution, for the sake of making great attainments in science. With a ruined constitution, his attainments can be of but little use to the world.

As instructors are bound to promote good morals and piety in their schools, so their pupils are under obligation to second their endeavors for this object. Let it never be forgotten, that men are accountable creatures, even in the period of their pupilage; and, considered as candidates for the retributions of eternity, this constitutes a very

\* The insurrections and disturbances which somewhat frequently occur in our colleges, forms a very serious objection, in the minds of many parents, against giving their sons the advantages of a public education. It is devoutly to be wished that this objection may soon be done away, and that more correct views on this subject may be adopted by the young gentlemen who constitute the members of our literary institutions.

interesting portion of their probationary state. If pupils have already enlisted in the service of Christ, the situation they occupy furnishes them an important field of influence; and they ought to aid their instructors in improving the religious character of their schools. To pious students let me say, Think not that the whole of your present duty consists in qualifying yourselves for future usefulness. Do all the good you can, while obtaining your education. Exert yourselves to promote the cause of piety among your associates. How desirable that the fountains of piety should be so purified, as to send forth healthful streams to bless the earth. And let me say to all such students as are yet destitute of the grace of God, It is your solemn duty, even while pursuing your studies, to search diligently for the wisdom which is from above; and it is extremely hazardous as well as sinful, for you to pass through this forming age without obtaining it.

If all instructors are bound to seek the salvation of their pupils, this must be emphatically true of Bible class and Sabbath school teachers. These, when faithful, are among the most important coadjutors of the Christian minister, in effecting the early conversion of sinful men. They should make it their sedulous aim to be well furnished for their work; and they should be importunate in prayer, both for qualifications and success. Every teacher is under special obligation to intercede for his own class; and it is desirable that he should sometimes bring them before the mercy-seat, not only as a class, but as individuals. To all those youth and children who are enjoying Bible class and Sabbath school instruction, I would say, you are imperiously bound to improve your minds in the knowledge of divine truth, and in the knowledge of your duty. Your teachers, without any reward, devote much time to your instruction; and you can not do less than be grateful for their attentions to you, and observant of their counsels. O let not all these labors and prayers be lost upon you.

III. *Duties of Ministers and Hearers.*—This relation is as manifestly authorized by the word of God, as that subsisting between kings and their subjects, or magistrates and the people. It is one of the most solemn relations which exists among men, inasmuch as it has an immediate reference to the interests of eternity. When the religion of the gospel shall become universal, this relation will be one of those which will unite all the children of Adam. They will then all be associated in a great multitude of spiritual flocks, having pastors over them in the Lord. And their relative duties, considered as pastors and flocks, will engage very much of their attention. The faithful discharge of these duties will contribute greatly to the happiness of the social state on earth, and do much to prepare them for the more perfect blessedness of heaven.

This relation now exists in those parts of the world which are evangelized, though it is not acknowledged by the entire population of Christendom. Wherever the relation has taken place, the duties connected with it are obligatory. They can not be neglected on either part, without drawing down the displeasure of God. A minister of the gospel can not be a good *man* without being a good *minister*; that is, he can not discharge his duties to God, without discharging the

duties of his office—the duties he owes to his flock. And *they* can not be good men, in the neglect of their duty as a spiritual flock, and as hearers of the word.

But as the relation between the preachers of the gospel and their hearers, has already been partially considered under the *second* Article of the duties of godliness, and as it will naturally engage our attention again, in those Practical Remarks with which it is proposed to conclude the work, I shall not dwell on it in this place : but I could not persuade myself to pass it wholly unnoticed, when giving a list of relative duties. At present I will merely say, that a Christian minister must see to it that he understands the word of God—that he loves it—that he preaches it publicly and from house to house—that he lives according to its doctrines and precepts—that he prays for a blessing to attend the preached word and all the other means of grace—in fine, that he seeks to bring his hearers into a state of real reconciliation to God, and meetness for his eternal kingdom. On the other hand, his flock are under obligation to attend on his ministry, and to seek to bring with them those whom they find in the streets and lanes of the city, or in the high ways and hedges of the country, to increase the number of the destitute to whom their minister may have opportunity to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. Hearers should regularly attend on the word, and that with solemnity, candor, and a discriminating mind. The instructions they receive from the pulpit should influence their practice. As soon as they learn their duty, let them do it. They who are not only hearers but doers of the word, encourage the heart of their minister, and afford him the most substantial aid in his arduous and highly responsible work. There is another duty devolving on the hearers, which I must not omit, even in this brief summary—I refer to the duty of *praying* for their minister. Even Paul felt the need of his brethren's prayers. Hear his words : “And supplication for all saints ; *and for me*, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel.” Eph. vi. 18, 19. Would any church have a minister who shall prove a blessing to them and their children, they must not merely mention his case when they pray, but must offer up in his behalf prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him who is able to render him both faithful and successful.

IV. *The duties of Husbands and Wives.*—Marriage constitutes one of the most interesting relations which exist among men : and the relation can not exist, without laying the parties under obligation to discharge the duties resulting from it. These duties, which are termed *conjugal*, are equally obligatory on the husband and the wife. Marriage is a divine appointment. Gen. ii. 24. It is declared (Heb. xiii. 4) to be honorable in all ; and if it be honorable, then certainly it is *lawful*.\* Whatever advice was given in relation to this matter,

\* While marriage is lawful to all, it is evident that all marriages are not lawful. And since the subject of unlawful marriages is not so well understood as it is desirable it should be, I have thought it might be expedient to add a Note, containing a few hints which may aid an honest inquirer in finding the path of duty.

1. It is a matter of common consent, not only among Christian, but even pagan nations, that there is such a thing as unlawful marriage, by reason of the kindred previously



on account of times of persecution, or for other reasons, marriage is never forbidden by a divine command to any man, or order of men. See 1 Cor. vii. 26. Matt. xix. 11. 1 Tim. iii. 2—5; iv. 1—3. This relation binds the parties to each other as long as they live; “for the woman which hath a husband, is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth.” The same is true of the husband; he is bound to his wife so long as she liveth. Their duty both to God and to each other, lays them under solemn obligation to avoid adultery, lasciviousness, and every thing calculated to excite in each other’s mind the least suspicion of conjugal infidelity. Heb. xiii. 4. Num. v. 11—31.

existing between the parties. It will be conceded by all, that for own brothers and sisters to intermarry, would be very improper and wicked. A connection of this nature is termed *incest*.

2. The will of God, as made known in the scriptures, is to be our director in this, as well as in all other matters. This is a part of our duty concerning which God has seen fit to give us information; and having given the needed information, with some particularity, in the Old Testament, he did not see fit, with the same particularity, to repeat it in the New; since the reasons against incestuous marriages which then existed, still remain. The restrictions relating to marriage with near relatives, were not of a typical or local nature, but were founded in the fitness of things. It is therefore altogether improper to say concerning these restrictions, They were merely Jewish and ceremonial, and are therefore done away.

3. It is evident that the prohibition in the 18th of Leviticus, where it is said, “None of you shall approach any that is near of kin to him to *uncover their nakedness*,” refers to *marriage*. If that phrase, which occurs so often in this chapter, be not referred to marriage, why did the God of Israel so particularly point out to his people the kindred they might not approach; when it is evident, that to any other except the marriage bed, they might not approach at all, whether akin or not akin? It is also important to know, that in this list of prohibited marriages, the companion of the kinsman is called his *wife*, after his death as well as before; else the God of Israel must be understood, by all these statutes, to forbid nothing but adultery. But is not adultery forbidden in all instances? Why then are the degrees of kindred so nicely described in this catalogue of interdicted marriages? When we hear the divine Lawgiver say, Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father’s brother; thou shalt not approach to his *wife*—Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy daughter-in-law; she is thy son’s *wife*—Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother’s *wife*; we must understand him to forbid a man to marry either his aunt, his daughter-in-law, or his sister-in-law, after the death of their respective husbands; for, of course, he was not allowed to do it before their death.

4. It is a mistake which some have made, that if there be no *blood-relationship*, there is no incest. It is evident that *affinity* may be so intimate, as to constitute a connection in a high degree incestuous; or, at least, in a high degree unlawful. This is the case when a man marries his wife’s daughter; or his father’s wife: and yet in neither of these instances is there any *consanguinity*. In the 18th chapter of Leviticus, there are several connections interdicted, where the kindred was formed wholly by family marriages.

5. It may be of some importance to remark, that there is a difference between interdicted marriages as to the nature of their unlawfulness. Some marriages are unlawful to us as *men*, or human beings. This is the case with those which are forbidden on account of kindred. Some are unlawful to us as *members of the church of God*. Thus the Israelites were forbidden to intermarry with the heathen. And Christians are commanded not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. 2 Cor. vi. 14. See also 1 Cor. vii. 39. Other matrimonial connections may be unlawful to men, on account of the *office* they hold in the church. The high priest in the Jewish Church was not only forbidden to marry one who was near akin, or a heathen; but he was not allowed to marry a woman who had been divorced from her husband, nor a widow. And here let me suggest the inquiry, whether the same restriction be not applicable to the whole priesthood under the gospel—that is, to all the ministers of Christ? See Ezek. xlv. 22.

6. The importance of our giving diligent heed to the precepts and cautions of God’s word in relation to this subject, can not be too deeply impressed on our minds. God is both wise and good. He seeks his own glory and our happiness. Our duty and our interest are inseparably united. When we walk after the sight of our eyes, rather than in the way of his commandments, we say to God, Depart from us: we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. In forming the conjugal relation, it becomes us to attend to

The conjugal duties are not all discharged, merely by keeping the marriage bed undefiled. The husband and wife are under covenant obligation to live in love, and to act in concert. A man leaves his father and mother, and is joined unto his wife : the woman also leaves her parents, and is joined unto her husband ; and they two, in no unimportant sense, become one. The oneness of the relation was no doubt designed to be displayed, by the manner in which the Creator chose to give existence to the first pair. The man was created alone : the woman was then taken from him, and when made a distinct person, was returned to him to be his companion and helper. It was in view of this transaction that the Savior said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Matt. xix. 6.

Conjugal duties are reciprocal ; and yet somewhat different, according to the different places which God has assigned to the husband and the wife. For them to know their respective places and the duties connected with them, is of vital importance to domestic happiness. The Lord has constituted the husband the head of his wife. Eph. v. 23, 24. If the husband should see fit, for any particular reason, to resign to his wife the superintendence and control of their common concerns, she may undertake it ; but she must not assume it herself, or claim it as her right. The authority which is exercised by the husband, is not to resemble that of the master over his slave, nor that of the parent over his child. The master and the parent are required, not only to counsel and command, but also, if need be, to chastise. Not so the husband. It is certain that every thing tyrannical in the conduct of the husband, is as contrary to the spirit of the scriptures, as it is to the refinements of civilized society. The scriptures require the husband to give honor to the wife, as unto the weaker, the more fragile, delicate vessel. 1 Pet. iii. 7. They say, "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." Again ; "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies." Let the spirit of these precepts be universally felt, and there would be no more tyrannical husbands.

The scriptures are equally explicit in requiring a voluntary subjection in the wife, as in forbidding a lordly, domineering spirit in the husband. Thus it is commanded, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be subject to their own husbands in every thing." If their talents and education are superior to those of their

every precept and hint of God's word, which relates to the subject. When cases occur which are doubtful, it is the part of wisdom to take the safest side. If there be some marriages concerning which there is a dispute among good men, whether they are included among the prohibited alliances, it will certainly be the safer way to avoid forming that connection ; for while there are some good men who believe that God forbids, there are none who will pretend that he requires, such a connection. From prohibited cases which are specified, we may argue the unlawfulness of parallel cases which are not specified. But it will be preposterous to reason from cases which are merely supposed to be lawful, in favor of the lawfulness of connections which are explicitly stated, and as explicitly forbidden.

7. It is a matter of no small importance that men should get their minds enlightened on this practical subject, before they are placed under any particular temptation to transgress the prescribed rules ; for when they have once formed an attachment, they are but illy prepared to consult the will of God concerning their duty in this particular.

husbands, and if they have sustained a higher rank in society, still, by becoming wives, they have laid themselves under obligation to be their husbands' inferiors in the domestic circle, and to yield obedience to their authority. If they refuse to do this, they resist the ordinance of God; for it is not their husbands, but God himself who has decided the question of priority. There is no doubt that the comfort, as well as the amiableness of the wife, depends very much on her cheerful submission to this divine ordinance. This is that trait in the character of Sarah, which the apostle Peter particularly notices, and which he proposes for the imitation of her spiritual daughters. 1 Pet. iii. 6.

Husbands and wives are under special and covenant obligation to regard each other's welfare at all times, and to do what they can to promote each other's health and comfort. Their earnings belong to a common treasury. It is more particularly incumbent on the husband, to provide for the temporal wants of his wife and family; but still it is spoken of as one of the excellencies of the virtuous woman, that "she looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness." In the scriptures, industry and economy are considered not only as masculine, but also as *feminine* virtues. See Prov. xxxi.

The duties of the conjugal relation are not limited to the things of this life. The apostle Peter urges upon believing wives a propriety of conduct towards their unbelieving husbands, by suggesting its probable, or at least its possible influence, in alluring them to a life of piety; and he enforces the duties both of husbands and wives, by showing that they ought to conduct like *heirs together of the grace of life, that their prayers might not be hindered*. 1 Pet. iii. 1—7. They who are so united as, in the language of scripture, to be called "one flesh," are, by means of this union, furnished with peculiar opportunities either for helping or hindering each other, in relation to the interests of the soul. If it is the duty of those who are connected by no tie but that of being fellow creatures, to seek each other's spiritual welfare, how great must be *their* obligation, in this respect, who sustain such an intimate connection as that of husband and wife? The husband and wife may either of them do much to hinder the devotions of the family—to hinder one another in the observance of the Sabbath, and in attendance on the ministry of the word—in fine, to hinder one another's salvation. But if they adopt the word of God for their rule, instead of hindering, they will strive to help each other in the way to heaven. They will speak often one to the other concerning the things of God, and will seek to increase in each other a doctrinal and experimental knowledge of divine truth, and conformity to it in practice. In their closets they will intercede for each other, and will be watchful to avoid all those irregularities of life, which have a tendency to interrupt the daily offerings on the family altar.

The conjugal duties, as well as all others, ought to be performed in a *perfect* manner; and yet it is not reasonable that any husband or wife should expect to find in each other this desired perfection; since the scriptures assure us that the most sanctified characters are still imperfect. If we have failings, the family state will be apt to expose them: if, therefore, we do not make allowance for these failings, nor



cherish mutual forbearance, we can not live happily in the conjugal state. There doubtless are families, in which this direction of the Savior needs to be followed, even with numerical exactness ; “ If thy brother trespass against thee *seven* times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent ; thou shalt forgive him.” The spirit of the gospel will prepare us to guard against that hatred which stirreth up strife, and to cultivate that love which covereth all sins. While duty requires of the husband and the wife an unlimited exercise of a forgiving spirit, it also requires them to be very watchful against provoking one another to wrath. They have no right to neglect to rule their spirit, or bridle their tongue, because they are at home. Nor does the religion of the gospel allow them to be less assiduous in preserving, than in gaining each other’s esteem. That injunction will forcibly apply to such as are in the married state ; *Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

“ Whose kind designs to serve and please,  
Through all their actions run.”

V. *The duties of Parents and Children.*—The relation between parents and children is founded in nature ; and must of necessity bring with it reciprocal duties. On a proper discharge of these duties, mainly depends the good of children, the comfort of parents, the peace of civil society, and the prosperity of the church. It is of the highest importance to all who sustain the relation either of parents or children, and especially to Christians sustaining these relations, that they should know what God requires of them in their respective capacities. Let us first consider what he requires of *parents*.

As both parents are equally related to their children, so parental duties are incumbent on them both. “ My son,” said Solomon, “ hear the instruction of thy *father*, and forsake not the law of thy *mother*.” This direction to the child, supposes both the father and the mother to be employed in giving him instruction and exercising government over him. There are *maternal*, as well as *paternal* duties ; and while our offspring are in early childhood, the former are of superior importance. King Lemuel remembered the prophecy which his mother taught him, when she said, “ What, my son ? and what, the son of my womb ? and what, the son of my vows ?” Prov. xxxi. 1, 2. From this address we learn, that it is the duty of mothers to teach their *sons* as well as their daughters ; and to avail themselves of the ties of nature and the obligations of religion, to impress suitable instruction on their tender minds. The duties of parents relate both to the bodies and souls of their children.

First. It is the duty of parents to provide for the *bodily* wants of their offspring. Children come into the world in a perfectly helpless state ; so that they could not survive a day, unless sustained by other hands than their own. The duty of sustaining them, manifestly devolves on their parents. The mother is the nurse that God has provided for the infant ; and if she be a lady or a queen, she has no right to plead exemption from this maternal office, unless she can plead a corporeal disability. When the scripture illustrates a quiet, submissive temper by the case of a weaned child, the child is spoken of as one “ that is weaned of his *mother*.” Ps. cxxxi. 2. This maternal

office was performed by such women as Sarah and Hannah ; and also by the mother of Jesus. See Luke ii. 27, and xi. 27.

The child, after it is weaned from the breast, is still for a long time dependent on its parents for the supply of its natural wants. And the apostle has decided concerning a member of Christ's church, who is inattentive to those wants, and does not provide for those of his own house, that he hath practically denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. 1 Tim. v. 8. As long as children remain incapable of procuring their own support, even should that incapacity extend through life, (as in the case of idiots and some others,) the obligation will rest on the parents.

Though, during the minority of children, it belongs to their parents to see them provided for, yet they have a right to avail themselves of the children's labor to aid them in making this provision. It is no kindness to children, whether sons or daughters, to be indulged in idleness during their non-age. On the contrary, it is doing them a serious injury, and is in repugnance to that command, *Train up a child in the way he should go*. It is a duty which we owe to society, as well as to our children, to teach them some useful calling or employment, by which they may be able to procure their own subsistence, and do something to augment the public revenue. Every parent should deprecate the thought of having his child loiter away his time, depending on the industry of others for a maintenance, and doing nothing to serve the interests of his generation. Mr. Henry, when commenting on the employments of Cain and Abel, (Gen. iv. 1, 2,) observes ; "They both had a calling. Though they were heirs apparent to the world, their birth noble, and their possessions large ; yet they were not brought up in idleness. God gave their father a calling, even in innocency ; and *he gave them* one. Note, It is the will of God that we should every one of us have something to do in this world. Parents ought to bring up their children to business. *Give them a Bible and a calling ;* (said good Mr. Dodd ;) *and God be with them.*"

Secondly. The duties of parents have much to do with the *souls* of their children. The great end of all those injunctions which were given to the church of Israel in relation to their children, was to lead them to *set their hope in God* ; or to make them a pious progeny. That this should be the grand object of parental instruction in the Christian church, is evident from the command given to fathers to bring up their children *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*. The duties which parents owe to their children, considered as young immortals, may be comprised under the following heads :

1. *Intercession* for them. This duty is obligatory on all who sustain the relation of fathers and mothers. I place this at the head of parental duties, not only on account of its pre-eminent importance, but because we can be laboring fervently in prayer for the salvation of our children, while as yet we can scarcely employ any other means for its promotion.—The birth of a child creates a new relation, and new responsibilities. Were they duly felt by the parent, could he keep away from the mercy-seat a single hour ? Thither he should resort to present a thank-offering for the blessing he has received, and to supplicate needed mercy. He is dependent on God to preserve the

life of the young child ; as also his own life, and that of his consort. It behooves both parents to improve this early hour in asking grace for themselves, to enable them to discharge the weighty duties involved in the parental relation ; and for their child, to render it submissive and docile ; to change its corrupt nature and prepare it for heaven. As soon as the Lord puts the babe into our arms, it should be our prayer to him, *O that this child might live before thee !* Jesus said, "Suffer the *little* children to come (i. e. to be brought) unto me, and forbid them not." In the arms of prayer, they can be thus brought. And, in this way, they can not be brought too early nor too often. Let the prayer of David become familiar to every parent : "Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue forever before thee."

2. Parents are under obligation to exercise *government* over their children. Were it merely to qualify their offspring to be good members of civil society, this would be no unimportant duty. But when viewed in its bearing on their piety and salvation, its importance and indispensableness become strikingly apparent. "Withhold not correction from the child : for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, *and shalt deliver his soul from hell.*" God has placed the rod of discipline in the hands of parents, and has said to them, "He that spareth the rod, hateth his son ; but he that loveth him, chasteneth him betimes." While fathers are cautioned against provoking their children to wrath, they are also cautioned against that tenderness which neglects, or even defers, such correction as is needful. Parental government can hardly be established too early. Infancy manifests a perverseness which calls for discipline to control and subdue it ; that is, to teach it submission to the will of the parent.

As soon as reason prepares the way for it, *reproof* must be added to correction ; for "the *rod* and *reproof* give wisdom." It is frequently the case that reproof will suffice without the rod. The good of children sometimes requires a solemn charge should be given them by their parents, warning them against evil companions, and against all the vices and temptations to which they are exposed. The apostle reminds the Thessalonians, that he *charged* every one of them, *as a father doth his children*. Parental government ought to be such, that the child shall not make himself vile, and yet be unrestrained. As soon as our children are capable of being made acquainted with the fact, they ought to be informed that the authority which we exercise over them has not been assumed by us, but has been committed to our hands by Him who has made, and who will judge, both the parents and the children. Pointing them to God's own words, we should show them that it is He who has entrusted us with this rule over them ; and that, ruling for Him, we are to require what he requires, and forbid what he forbids. We are to bring them up in *the admonition of the Lord*.

3. It is undoubtedly the duty of parents to afford *instruction* to their children. Their mental improvement is needful to qualify them for the business of this life ; but it must appear altogether more important, when they are viewed as accountable creatures, and candidates for



the rewards of eternity. God himself has decided the matter, that for the soul to be without knowledge, is not good. Prov. xix. 2. When children are first committed to the care of parents, they have souls, but they are vacant of ideas, and need to be stored with useful knowledge; and it is the business of their parents to see that it is done. They may call to their aid schools of science, and schools of religion. Of the latter class, Sabbath-schools furnish to the parents of this generation, very valuable auxiliaries. It is the duty of parents to bring their children, not only under Sabbath-school instruction, but also under the ministry of the word. But parents can not employ so many auxiliaries in the work, as to free themselves from obligation *personally* to engage in giving instruction to their children. The command which God gave to parents in the church of Israel, to teach his laws diligently to their children—to talk of them when sitting in their houses, or walking by the way—when lying down, or rising up;—ought not to be considered by parents in the Christian church, as having waxen old and vanished away. See Deut. vi. 6, 7.

Much of the book of Proverbs has the form of a father's address to his son; and this intimates that it well becomes a father to address his sons, and his daughters too, on such serious subjects. When the hearts of the fathers are turned to their children, by the power of the Holy Ghost, they will all, even the most unlettered among them, engage in the work of impressing divine truth on the minds of their offspring. Though their children may enjoy great advantages for religious instruction in the Sabbath-school, in the Bible class, or under the ministry of the word, still they can not refrain from personal attention to a work so important and so delightful. Parental piety will not consent to do all this work by the hand of others: no, its language is, "Hear, ye children, the instruction of a *father*," and hear, ye children, the instruction of a *mother*, "and attend to know understanding."

4. *Exemplary conduct* before children constitutes no unimportant part of parental duty. There are no other examples so constantly in view of children, as those of their parents; and there are no others which will naturally have equal influence in forming their character. Surely, every parent ought to adopt the resolution of him who said, *I will walk within my house with a perfect heart*. Of what unspeakable consequence it is, that the father and mother walk circumspectly within their own house; that their behavior towards each other, and towards their children and servants—their treatment of their neighbors, whether they are present or absent;—should be upright, benevolent, and discreet. How important to the spiritual interests of their family, that they should keep themselves from angry words, from falsehood, profaneness, obscenity, backbiting, covetous practices, sabbath-breaking, and all other transgressions of God's law. If the church have no right to expect the conversion of the unbelieving world around them, except the light of their good works shine upon them, certainly we can have no right to expect the conversion of our children, without we add to our instructions an instructive example.

There is another reason why our wicked lives tend to ruin the souls of our offspring; it provokes God to withhold from them that special

influence, without which there is no hope that any instruction, however good, will effect their conversion. That is a dreadful threatening, and one which is often verified: "Seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children." Hos. iv. 6.

*Filial duties will now be considered.* These are the duties which children owe to their parents; and they may all be comprised in subjection to their authority—docility under their instruction—respectful treatment of them through life—and a readiness to afford them temporal support in case they should need it.

1st. *Subjection to parental authority.*—It is the duty not only of little children, but of all who are in their minority, to yield obedience to the authority of their parents. And even those who have arrived to full age, if they continue in their father's house as heretofore, are under obligation to be subject to the known rules of the family.

There is no authority in this lower world more manifestly sanctioned by the Supreme Government, than that of parents over their children. It is established by one of the ten commands, and this command holds the first place in the second table. The spirit of that command is expressed by the apostle in these words: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right." Again he expresses it thus: "Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." The obedience of children is required to be universal, extending to all things which are not forbidden by God himself: and this universal obedience is declared to be well pleasing to the Lord. Jesus Christ, who is our perfect example, as well as our gracious Redeemer, was once a child and had earthly parents; and it is testified of him that "he was *subject* unto them." Luke ii. 51.—Every child is under obligation to copy this trait in the character of the child Jesus. Nor can any one claim to be his disciple, who does not do it.

2dly. *Docility under parental instruction.*—If, as we have seen, it is the duty of parents to give the nurture of the Lord to their children, then it must be the duty of their children to receive it. If God has commanded us diligently to teach the truths of his word to our children, he certainly must have made it their duty to be teachable, and to incline their ears to such instruction. Their obligation to do so, is implied in the command given them to obey their parents in all things. When their parents take the place of teachers, a spirit of obedience in the children will not suffer them to turn away their ears from the words of their mouth. The judgment of God with respect to this part of filial obligation, is definitely expressed in these two proverbs: "A wise son heareth his father's instruction." "A fool despiseth his father's instructions." Prov. xiii. 1; xv. 5. Children do not fully comply with the divine requisition, by a *mere consent* to hear the instructions of their parents; they ought to be *swift to hear*, and patient in hearing. Thus would they invite and encourage their parents to the discharge of this important branch of their duty towards them.

3dly. *A respectful treatment of parents.*—This is a filial duty which is obligatory as long as the relation lasts. When children arrive at manhood and go from home, they cease to be under parental authority; they are now of age, and may speak and act for themselves: but their

obligation to love and reverence their parents, still remains. "A son honoreth his father;" at least, he will do so, provided he makes *right* his standard of action. And he will honor his mother too; for God requires that both parents should be honored. That children are to honor their parents in their old age, and as long as they live, is evident from this proverb: "Hearken to thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old." Prov. xxiii. 22. While this proverb shows that aged parents claim respect from their children, it suggests one way in which that respect is to be manifested, namely, by *hearkening* to them—by attentively listening to their counsel and admonitions. Let those children who treat their parents with disrespect, weigh well the following denunciation: "Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother: and all the people shall say, Amen." No ill-conduct on the part of the parent, can make it right for the child to treat him even with temporary disrespect. When Noah had dishonored himself, his sons were not thereby authorized to behave disrespectfully towards him; and the one who did so, fixed a stigma on himself and his race, which has not yet been wiped off. See Gen. ix. 20—27.

4thly. *Providing for the maintenance of parents, when circumstances require it.*—That the fifth command in the decalogue requires this, is made certain by the exposition of the Lawgiver himself. He charged the scribes and Pharisees with making void this commandment by a statute of their own: "But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do aught for his father or his mother; making the word of God of none effect through your tradition which ye have delivered." Mark vii. 11—13. Christ's own example gives peculiar weight to the above decision; for when he was leaving the world, he made provision for the temporal support of his mother, by committing her to the special care of his beloved disciple. John xix. 25—27.

This part of filial duty is clearly inculcated in Paul's first letter to Timothy. He thus writes: "But if any widow have children or nephews, let them first learn to show piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God." This passage, taken in its connection, clearly teaches two things: First, That children who are able to support their dependent parents, have no right to throw them on the church, or town, or any charity society; but are themselves under obligation to provide for them. Secondly, That children are to consider such provision made for their parents, as a mere *requital* for what they have previously received from them. All that children can do for their parents in their old age, will, in general, but imperfectly repay the expense and toil which their parents bestowed on them in their helpless years. Unless the religion of a child prompts him to show piety at home, and makes him cheerful in the discharge of this, as well as other filial duties, it lacks evidence of being that religion that is pure and undefiled before God.

In addition to the filial duties which have already been considered, children are, no doubt, under obligation to feel a tender concern for the *spiritual interests* of their parents: and there are ways in which it is proper for them to manifest this concern. There are some prayerless



parents, who have praying children. And can these children help striving for the conversion of their parents? They can intercede for them—put a religious book or tract into their hands—allure them by their pious and filial deportment: they can even address them on this interesting subject, beseeching them to make an experiment of the good there is in religion. When the apostle said, “Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father,” it is implied, that, though it be improper for a child to tell his father his faults in that form of reproof and rebuke, which it would be proper the father himself should make use of; there is nevertheless a way for him to unburthen his mind. Let him take the place of a suppliant, and *entreat* his father not to sin against God, against his family, or against his own soul.

VI. *The duties of Brothers and Sisters.*—These are the duties which the children of a family owe to one another. As children, their duties are *filial*—as brothers and sisters, they are *fraternal*. The bond of brotherhood is a natural and tender tie; therefore it is that “brotherly love,” and “brotherly kindness,” are expressions denoting very tender affection. When David says concerning his conduct towards an enemy, “I behaved myself as though he had been my friend and brother,” it supposes an intimate relation to subsist between brothers. Joseph gave vent to his tenderest emotions, by saying, “I am Joseph, your brother.” Under the term *brotherhood*, are included all the children of a family, sisters as well as brothers. The relation is the same, and the obligations it imposes are the same.

I shall divide fraternal duties into two classes: the first including the kind offices which brothers and sisters owe each other, while dwelling together under the parental roof; and the second, such as they owe each other in subsequent life, when they are dispersed in the world.

First. I shall briefly consider the duties of brothers and sisters, while they live together under the parental roof. They are bound to love one another, and to live together in an amicable manner. When Christians are required to “love as brethren,” it supposes that such as are connected by the natural tie of brotherhood, are under pressing obligation to love one another. “Behold,” says the Psalmist, “how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.” This is true in application to *natural*, as well as spiritual brethren. It is shameful for children of the same parents to contend, and to abuse each other—to sit and speak against their brother, and slander their own mother’s son. Ps. l. 20. When any cause of contention has arisen between brothers and sisters, they should each one say, (as did Abraham, when there was a strife between his herdsmen and those of his kinsman Lot,) “Let there be, I pray thee, no strife between me and thee; for we are *brethren*.”

There is one thing which greatly disturbs the peace of the domestic circle: it is when one child assumes authority over another, and undertakes to command, to threaten, and even to inflict punishment. God has entrusted the parent with authority over his children; but he has never given them any right to rule over one another. This is manifestly implied, in the argument which the Savior used to prevent his

disciples from all attempts to lord it over one another: "But be ye not called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." As if he had said, You are like the children of a family, who have no authority over each other, but are all under one common government. The elder children have no more right to exercise authority over the younger, than the younger have to exercise it over the elder: both are equally under parental control. Whatever they do, in the way of regulating each other's conduct, must be limited to advice and example. If, when one of their number has transgressed, they can not by these means reclaim him, they must present their complaint to that authority which God has established, to decide the controversies which shall arise between brothers and sisters. This was the course pursued by Joseph: he brought to his father the evil report of his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives. Gen. xxxvii. 2. Appeals to parental authority should never be prompted by ill nature; but by a desire to promote the good of the offender, and the order and tranquillity of the domestic circle.

Brothers and sisters are under solemn obligation to avoid vitiating one another's minds, and corrupting one another's principles and morals. The older children have it in their power to corrupt their juniors; but what a dreadful abuse of their seniority, should they do it. How much more lovely, to employ their influence in improving them in knowledge and virtue. Brothers and sisters who are daily together at the same social meal and the same domestic altar, are privileged with more opportunities than almost any others of the race, to be useful to one another in the concerns of the soul. If any of their number have found the pearl of great price, they will be constrained to exert themselves for the conversion of their brethren according to the flesh. One, who has himself tasted that the Lord is gracious, will say to the rest, "O taste and see that the Lord is good—Brethren, it is my heart's desire and prayer to God in your behalf, that you may be saved." Love to the souls of those who are so dear to us by the ties of nature, will, if genuine, prompt us to walk circumspectly, lest we should throw some obstruction in the way of their salvation.

Secondly. I shall take a brief view of the duties which brethren owe to one another after they are dispersed in the world. The years of tutelage soon pass away, and brothers and sisters, one after another, leave their paternal home. They now cease to constitute one household, to derive their support from one common store, or to engage daily in one social prayer. But are their duties as brothers and sisters now at an end? Do we cease to be brethren, because we no longer dwell under the same roof? By no means; for the bond is indissoluble.—Joseph, who had been many years away from his brethren, and who was driven from them by their cruel envy, had lost none of his fraternal affection during this long period. He could still say, "I am your brother." And he continued to be their brother as long as life lasted. It is incumbent on all who sustain this relation, to cultivate brotherly feelings, and to evince them by corresponding actions, until the cold hand of death shall dissolve the bond of brotherhood.

What, it may be asked, are the relative duties of brothers and sisters after their dispersion? They are still bound to think of each other,

and that affectionately ; and to take every opportunity which presents, to inquire after each other's welfare. And they should always maintain a mutual intercourse. This they may do, in part, by epistolary correspondence, and also by personal visits. These methods of keeping up an intercourse, are manifestly obligatory on children towards their parents ; and they are duties which they also owe to each other. To be without natural affection is heathenish. Mutual intercession is no unimportant means of preserving brotherly affection among a dispersed family. Surely, brothers who never pray for each other, do not love one another with a *pure* heart fervently. Their love must be merely natural.

There is an evil under the sun, and it is common in families ; that brothers have contentions about the inheritance which their father has left them. When Christ was on earth, he had application to interfere in a dispute between brethren concerning their patrimony. One of the two said to him, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." It is among the proverbs of Solomon ; "A brother offended, is harder won than a strong city ; and their contentions are like the bars of a castle." Scarcely anything proves so fruitful a source of contention between brothers, as the dividing of their inheritance. This often brings the children of the same parents before the public, not in the endearing attitude of loving brothers, but in the forbidding one of angry litigants. "Brother goeth to law with brother." What a shameful thing ! "Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong ? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded ? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren." 1 Cor. vi. 6—8. But was it not *Christians*, instead of natural brothers, whom the apostle sought to dissuade from litigation ? It was. But how did he seek to dissuade them ? It was by reminding them, that through grace, they sustained a relation to each other which was intimate and tender, like that subsisting between children of the same parents. Had these things therefore been addressed to *literal*, instead of spiritual brothers, the reproof would have been equally severe.

Every thing knavish, oppressive, and cruel, in the conduct of brothers and sisters towards one another, should be regarded as barbarous, and studiously avoided. It is not enough that brothers avoid fraud and rigor in their dealings with each other ; they should be pitiful, tender, and yielding. If we ought to remember the stranger and relieve his wants, we surely ought not to hide ourselves from our own flesh. "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." This implies that we are made for mutual helps, and that adversity is a time when a brother's help is peculiarly needful.

Viewing this subject in the light of revealed truth, must there not be a radical defect in the piety of that man, who neglects the duties of the fraternal relation ? Such a man has not respect unto all God's commandments ; and must therefore be destitute of satisfactory evidence that the law is written in his heart.

VII. *The Duties of Masters and Servants.*—The scriptures fully



recognize such a relation as that of *master* and *servant*. The servants there spoken of, were either permanent or occasional ; being either the property of their masters, or such as were hired. In covenanting with Abraham, the Lord made a distinction between those servants of his that were born in his house, or bought with his money, and those whom he hired ; and this distinction between servants, seems to run through the scriptures both of the Old and New Testaments. While the Bible plainly allows of the relation of masters and servants, it most pointedly condemns men-stealers ; classing them with criminals of the first magnitude ; and men-stealing is at the foundation of most of that servitude, called *slavery*, which now exists among men. The prevalent practice of making slaves of the Africans, is repugnant to the spirit of the gospel ; and when this benign spirit shall direct every man's conduct, it will, no doubt, drive slavery from the earth : yet the gospel does not encourage even the slave to desert his master. " Art thou called, being a servant ? care not for it : but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman." 1 Cor. vii. 20, 21. The scriptures teach us to consider the interests of the life to come as being so superlatively important, as almost to annihilate those little distinctions of the present life, which are made by poverty and riches, bondage and freedom.

Though it is the tendency of the word of God to lead to the establishment of free governments, yet it inculcates subjection, as the duty of those whom Providence has placed under governments of a different character. By this we learn, that its direct and principal object is not to model human governments, but rather to bring the subjects of every government under the spiritual dominion of the Most High. The same remark will apply to the subject of servitude. The word of God informs us what those duties are, that grow out of the relations which actually exist. In the epistles which Paul wrote to the Ephesians and Colossians, the relative duties of a family are recorded in order : and in both of them the duties of masters and servants have a distinct place. Eph. vi. 5—9. Col. iii. 2—25, and iv. 1. The time may not be distant, when the name of *slave* will no longer be heard : but the relation of *master* and *servant* will doubtless remain through all succeeding generations. The man who hires laborers to work in his field, or in his shop, is, for the time being, their master. Apprentices, in scriptural language, are servants. Such parents as are unable to furnish support for their own children, may authorize others to assume this, and some other duties originally devolving on themselves. These children, unless adopted by the person under whose care they are placed, must be considered as bearing the relation of servants.

Having made these introductory remarks on the relation of masters and servants, I proceed to give a sketch of the duties which arise from this relation.

First. The duty of *masters*. They who sustain this relation must remember, that they themselves have a Master in heaven, who is no respecter of persons. If they duly consider that they and their servants have one common nature, and are accountable to one common Judge, it will tend to counteract all haughtiness of feeling, and impe-

riousness of conduct, towards those servants. It will tend to make them forbear threatening. Eph. vi. 9. Masters ought to cultivate kind and paternal feelings towards their servants. It is said that the centurion's servant was *dear* unto him ; by which it appears that the centurion was not only a great believer, but an affectionate master. It is wrong for masters to require more labor of their servants than they are able to perform ; and to find fault with them, when they have really merited their approbation.

It is required of masters to give to their servants that which is just and equal. Col. iv. 1. As far as this requisition relates to *hired* servants, it forbids us to *oppress the hireling in his wages*, by not agreeing to give him enough ; or by not giving him the full wages which were agreed on ; or by delaying to make a prompt payment. To oppress the hired man in any of these ways, is in God's account a great sin. See Lev. xix. 13. Mal. iii. 5. Jam. v. 4. In relation to other servants, the requisition is not without meaning. Even those servants who are the property of their masters, have claims on their justice. They have a claim for comfortable food and clothing, for lodging and time for rest, when they are in health ; and for medical aid and nursing when they are sick. The command to give to servants that which is just and equal, obliges the master to discharge the indentured servant, when the stipulated term of his service is ended ; and then not to send him away empty ; at least, not to fail in making good what had been promised him. Deut. xv. 12, 18. And does it not behoove the master, whose legal claim to his servants is unlimited, to inquire whether justice do not demand that he should shorten the time of their servitude, and that he should take pains to prepare his slaves to become freemen.

The relation between masters and their servants, like that between parents and their children, draws along with it duties of a more solemn nature, even such as have a bearing on the interests of eternity. When Jehovah became the God of Abraham, he covenanted with him as the master of his servants, as well as the father of his children : for he required him to extend the seal of the covenant to his servants, (excepting those who were merely hired for a season,) and to include them with his children in the religious instruction and discipline of the family. According to the tenor of this covenant, Abraham commanded not only his children, but his whole household, to keep the way of the Lord. In this he was a pattern to other masters, as well as to other fathers. Those servants who are placed under masters, whether for life, or only for a limited number of years, are entitled to the benefit of a fatherly government and instruction, especially such instruction as is of a religious nature ; for servants, as well as their masters, have *souls*. Masters are under solemn obligation to set a good example before their domestics : to teach them to sanctify the Sabbath, and exact no labor from them on that holy day, nor indulge them in any recreation incompatible with its sacredness. They are to allow and even require them to attend on the public means of instruction which are enjoyed in the sanctuary. It is incumbent on masters to pray for their servants ; and not only give them the privilege of being present at the morning and evening devotions of the family, but to see to it

that they do not absent themselves. They ought also to instruct them concerning their obligation to pray to God in their closets, and willingly allow them time for this duty.

The duty of *servants*. It is the duty of all, whether they be bond or hired servants, to be *faithful* in the business of their masters. They are, in God's word, cautioned against *eye service*; meaning that which they are prompted to perform by being under the master's eye, and which is suspended or relaxed as soon as they are out of his sight. *Obedience* belongs to the duty of bond and apprenticed servants; even such obedience as children owe to their parents. Paul says, "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh." Peter says, "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward." Col. iii. 22. 1 Pet. ii. 18. He speaks of that obedience which they should render in such trying circumstances, as peculiarly pleasing to God. Paul, in the last chapter of his first letter to Timothy, shows that an obedient and respectful deportment in Christian servants towards their masters, is needful to prevent the name of God and his doctrine from being blasphemed. If servants who profess to be converted to Christianity, do not improve in the discharge of the appropriate duties of their station in life, they will do essential injury to the cause of Christ. It was the expectation of the apostle, that the conversion of Onesimus to the Christian faith, would convert him from an unprofitable to a profitable servant. Phil. ii. 10, 11. Servants are under obligation to submit to *instruction* as well as to government. To this they should cheerfully listen; esteeming it a great privilege if they have a master or mistress, who is willing to devote time to impart instruction to them. Servants who corrupt one another, and who vitiate the morals of the children where they live, are doing a great evil in God's sight. It is a breach of fidelity in them to disclose things which concern the families where they live, and which do not concern the public. To sum up the duties of servants in a word; they should, like the servant of Abraham, of whom we have a particular account in the twenty-fourth chapter of Genesis, make their masters' interest their own. The nearer they come to this rule, the better will they fill their place in society. And if they do all this in singleness of heart, as unto Christ, they will be sure to receive his approbation. See Eph. vi. 5—8.

It would be absurd to suppose that the religion of God's holy word should have no influence in improving the character of masters and servants. Look at Abraham and his servant, to whom allusion was just had. It was religion which made the one a good master, and the other a good servant. Look at Joseph, while he filled the place of a servant in Potiphar's house. Was it not manifestly his religion which made him the faithful servant? We may have religion, and yet never have opportunity to show its influence in forming the character of the master or the servant; but if these relations should be sustained, our religion must influence to the performance of the duties which they impose on us. In such circumstances we could not walk in the truth, without having respect to those commands of God which are particularly addressed to masters and servants.

The duties of husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers



and sisters, masters and servants, which have now been briefly considered, comprehend those which are binding upon us in the capacity of families. They are what are more usually intended by *relative duties*. Besides the relations existing in a single family, there are others originated by consanguinity and intermarriages, which are sufficiently near to require some duties of the relative class. Among others, the scriptures recognize the relation of *grand parent* and *grand child*, of *uncle* and *nephew*, and of *cousins*. Timothy is reminded of the piety of his grandmother, as though it were a thing of much consequence to him. 2 Tim. i. 5. Nephews are, by the apostle, classed with children, as though they were under some obligation to provide for their widowed aunts who were indigent, as children were to provide for their mothers. 1 Tim. v. 4. Abraham and Lot sustained the relation of uncle and nephew; and it is evident that Abraham considered it as a relation sufficiently intimate to impose relative duties. See Gen. xiii. 8 and xiv. 12, 16. The relation of *cousins* was the bond of kindred between the mother of John the Baptist, and the mother of our Lord; and it was not considered as too remote to be noted in the sacred history. Luke i. 36.

But with respect to those natural ties, and such as are still more remote, I shall content myself with merely reminding the reader of their existence, and suggesting the thought, that as these ties lead our relatives to take more interest in us, so they make way for our nearer access to them, and lay us under obligation to take the advantage of it to do them good, as we are able and have opportunity, both in the things of time and of eternity.

#### THE DIVISION HARMONIZED.

The relative duties are in harmony one with another. The duties of relatives are reciprocal; they bind on both sides. If the rulers are authorized to enact laws and execute them, the citizens must be under obligation to be subject to their laws and administration. On the other hand, if the citizens are under obligation to be subject to the laws, the rulers are under equal obligation to enact good laws, and rule in righteousness. Had the scriptures limited the obligation to one of these relations, there would have been an unnatural discord. It would have been so, had they obliged the rulers to discharge the duties of their office, and released the people from obligation to submit to their authority; or had they required subjection on the part of the people, without requiring a righteous administration on the part of the rulers. God has appointed that some should sustain the office of rulers, to enable them to do more for the public good; and as their work is honorable and arduous, they have a claim to reward, respect, co-operation, and fervent intercessions from their fellow citizens. Let the word of God be made the rule of conduct, and there will be no oppressive magistrates, nor insubordinate subjects.

There is the same harmony between the duties of the teacher and the scholar. If it is the duty of the one to teach, it is the duty of the other to learn: and if it belongs to the teacher to be assiduous in

communicating, it belongs also to the scholar to be assiduous in acquiring knowledge. If the teacher is under obligation to watch over the moral and religious principles of his pupils, they must be under obligation to watch over their own morals and religious principles. And if it is the duty of teachers to have good order in their schools, it must be the duty of their scholars to be orderly by being subject to good rules. Let the religion of the Bible influence instructors and their pupils, and all will be harmony.

There is no discord between the duties of a pastor and those of his flock. He is required to preach the word to them, and they are required to hear the word from his mouth. He is required to preach the unadulterated truth, and this they are required to receive. As a father he is to watch over them in the Lord, and they are to be child-like in their behavior towards him. While it is made his duty to devote his time and talents to their spiritual interests, it is theirs, to provide for his temporal support. "Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they that preach the gospel should live of the gospel." 1 Cor. ix. 14. The duties of the pastor and his flock are mutual, and therefore they are harmonious.

There is an entire agreement between the various duties of domestic society. This is strikingly true of the duties of the *conjugal* relation. God has given the husband and wife their respective places, and pointed out the duties pertaining to each. Their obligation is mutual and permanent. The husband is not commanded to *obey* his wife; for the man is the head of the woman. But he is forbidden to be bitter against her, and is required to nourish and cherish her as the Lord doth the church. It was of great importance to the comfort of this endeared relation, that the Creator himself should decide the question concerning precedence. And all that he has said about their respective duties, must be in harmony with this decision.

There is a harmony between the duties of parents, and those of their children. Parents are allowed to claim respectful treatment from their children, as being their elders in age, and, under God, the authors of their existence: and children are commanded to honor their parents. Parents are to rule, and children are to obey. If God had made it the duty of the parents to rule, and had not enjoined it on the children to obey, there would have been a manifest want of harmony. But the scriptural exhibition of parental and filial duties, is very harmonious. What a sweet harmony between parents being required to make provision for the natural wants of their children during their helpless age, and children being required to provide for the wants of their parents, when, through age or infirmity, they have become helpless and dependent. It has been shown that parents are required to care for the souls of their offspring, as well as for their bodies. Were they required to care only for their bodies, and allowed to neglect the culture of their minds, what manifest inconsistency would there be. Or were they required to provide for their bodily wants and for their mental improvement, but permitted to neglect their undying souls, the inconsistency would be still more apparent. There is a harmony between the different things which parents are laid under obligation to do for the spiritual interests of their children. They are required to pray to God

for his blessing on them ; and also to train them up in the way they should go, by the united influence of parental authority, instruction, and example,

The obligation of brothers and sisters is reciprocal. The children of a family are all under obligation to love one another. How right that they should be required to dwell together in unity.

There is a harmony between the duties of masters and servants, God claims it as his prerogative to rule over both ; and he as much requires masters to respect the rights of their servants, as servants to respect the rights of their masters. This was the view which was entertained by Job ; as we learn from his protestations of innocence in the 31st chapter of his book : " If I did despise the cause of my man servant, or of my maid servant," &c.

The divine rules which are made to bind together the little society called a *family*, are all righteous and equal. There is not only a consistency between the duties of the correlatives in each relation, as husband and wife, parent and child ; but also between the duties of all the relations which constitute this interesting community. There is a perfect agreement between conjugal and parental duties. To be a good husband, or a good wife, is no hindrance to being a good father or mother ; but is the best possible preparation for it. We can not conceive how bad husbands and wives can make good parents. And to be a good father or mother, is no hindrance to being a good master or mistress. The proper discharge of their parental duties, will constitute an excellent preparation for the duties which they owe to their servants. So the duties of children to their parents, have no disagreement with such as they owe to one another. The more filial they are in the relation of children, the more fraternal they will be in the relation of brothers. Let the law of God be the rule, and there will be no schism in the domestic society ; all will be harmonious.

As the duties of the various relations which exist in a family, do not clash with one another, neither do they interfere with other relative duties. For example, the discharge of parental duties does not unfit a minister of Christ for the discharge of his ministerial duties. On the contrary, it is one of the specified qualifications of a good bishop, that he should be one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection. A man's discharging well the duties of a father, can form no disqualification for being a good monarch, or a good governor,—a good legislator, or a good judge : nor can it at all disqualify him for being a good and peaceable subject. And it is self-evident, that those children who have habituated themselves to yielding obedience to the commands of their parents, must be better prepared than others to obey the laws of their country. We can hardly imagine how obedient children can make seditious members of the state. And surely, no man ever thought that obedience to parents had a tendency to make disobedient and untractable pupils. The harmony subsisting between relative duties, is like that which appears in a well-framed building, where all the parts support and strengthen each other.

The duties comprehended in this Division, are in harmony with the *whole system* of divine truth,

There is no discord between relative and *general* duties. As the



scriptures do not require us so to love our own nation, as to disregard the rights of other nations; so they do not enjoin on us such duties to our relatives, as are at variance with the duties we owe to the public. The duties which we owe to our fellow men in general, were shown to consist in a proper regard to their persons, property, reputation, and eternal blessedness. In all these respects, we have peculiarly favorable opportunities of being useful to those with whom we stand connected by some relative tie; and especially to those with whom we are united by the tender ties of the domestic circle: but the most faithful performance of the duties which one owes to his own family, has no tendency to make him a misanthrope—an enemy to the family of man. A man may be tender of the persons, property, good name, and eternal interests, of his relatives, and not disregard those of his fellow men in general. Such parents as labor most to promote the salvation of their own children, are the very persons who will be the most apt to think of the salvation of other men, both young and old. They who are the most zealous in providing the means of grace for themselves and their families, are wont to be the most liberal in contributing for the spread of the gospel through the world.

Relative duties are not at variance with those which are *immediately due to God himself*. Indeed, he who neglects the latter, can not, in any proper sense, be said to discharge the former. We can not discharge the duties of rulers and subjects, instructors and pupils, pastors and flocks, husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, or masters and servants, in the neglect of either of the *first three* Articles of this class of duties; namely, *prayer to God—attention to his holy word—and the sanctification of his Sabbath*. Nor can there be any inconsistency between acting up to the obligations of relative life, and making an open profession of godliness; the duty which was enforced under the *fourth* Article. Instances have occurred, where the husband has opposed and denounced the wife, or the wife the husband, for resolving to unite with the church of Christ. The one remaining in unbelief, has seemed to address the other in language like this: “By joining yourself to the church and leaving me behind, you break the marriage covenant, and we can never hereafter consider ourselves as being *one flesh*.” But such opposition is highly unreasonable; for though it is true that the believer, by his profession, comes out from the world, (not excepting his nearest relatives, if they remain in unbelief,) and takes the side of Christ, yet his doing so does not dissolve any of the relations which he sustains in life. Will the husband who has joined the standard of the Redeemer, forsake or neglect his wife? Will his becoming a disciple of the meek and lowly Jesus, engender bitter feelings towards her, or render him less diligent to provide for her wants and those of his household? Surely, this will not be the effect of his conversion, (if genuine,) or of his incorporation with the church of the living God. Will a woman professing godliness, make a less amiable and obedient wife? Will she make a less attentive and affectionate mother? Let those children who have witnessed this transformation in their mother, answer the question.

It may be thought that there is a discrepancy between a man's duty to his family, and his obligation to make stated and liberal contribu-

tions to the Lord's treasury ; an obligation which constituted the subject of the *last* Article of the duties of godliness. But does not the same God who requires parents to support their children, also require them to honor Him with their substance, and with the first fruits of their increase ? There is nothing discordant in these two requisitions. We may support our children, without robbing the Lord's treasury to do it : yea, we may keep an open hand in supplying his treasury, without forgetting the claims of our families. See Ps. xxxvii. 25, 26. Ecc. ii. 1, 2.

The duties of relative life are in perfect harmony with the whole system of *experimental* religion. That benevolence which is the sum of inward religion, and which will lead us to do good to all men as we have opportunity, will stimulate us to special efforts for the good of those, whom the intimate relations of life give us peculiar facilities for benefiting. If they who rule over particular sections of a country, are under obligation to wish well to the interests of the whole ; and they who rule over one nation, to wish well to all nations : then certainly benevolence must excite them to make every exertion to promote the good of those, with whom their respective offices bring them into contact. True, it will prevent them from injuring other portions of the country, or of the earth, for the sake of promoting the prosperity of that which is under their particular rule ; but is it not reasonable that it should stir them up to pay very special attention to the prosperity of that portion which Providence has committed to their immediate care, and placed within the reach of their influence ? The same will apply to *instructors of youth*. If they desire the good of the whole rising generation, (and if they are benevolent, they must desire it,) they will exert themselves, in a very special manner, to promote the knowledge, the morals, and the piety of that portion of it which is placed under their immediate direction. So it is with *Christian ministers*. That universal good will, which leads them to desire the conversion of every sinner in the world, and the sanctification of every saint, can not fail to stir them up to unwearied efforts for the conversion of those sinners, and the sanctification of those saints, who are brought under their own ministry.

These remarks will apply with peculiar force to the *domestic relations*. But here it may be asked, whether there be anything in the discharge of the conjugal, parental, filial, and fraternal duties, which is in harmony with the disinterested nature of holy love. It is certain, that mere natural affection is not holiness ; and when the discharge of relative duties is prompted by this, and this alone, it constitutes no part of the practical religion of the gospel. Natural affection is common to men and beasts. It is innocent ; and to be destitute of it is reprobated, as being evidential of great progress in wickedness. Rom. i. 31. In this depraved world, natural affection is made subservient to the public good ; it being one of the strongest bonds by which society is united. The animal tribes could not be preserved without it. And in the absence of holy love, or with so little a portion of it as has hitherto been found among men, human society could not be held together without its aid. But God demands something more from man, than he does from mere animals. When he requires the husband

to love his wife as himself, and the wife to reverence her husband—parents to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and children to obey their parents in all things; he requires something more than natural affection; he requires actions which are the fruit of holy love—which are the external expressions of inward religion. These actions, it is true, he requires of all men, even of those who do not possess the religion of the heart: but when he requires the actions, it is always to be understood that he requires those affections which will render these actions acceptable in his sight.

Natural affection should be a handmaid to religion, but it should not be made a substitute for it. God requires that the duties of the conjugal, parental, filial, and fraternal relations, should, like all other duties, be performed under the influence of that love which is the fulfilling of the law. All are to be done heartily to the Lord. If they be not so done, they will never meet his approbation. There can not be so much natural affection and tenderness displayed in the domestic circle, as to please God, if that love, which is the fruit of the Spirit, be still wanting. Such love will not destroy natural affection, but will sanctify it. *Unsanctified* natural affection will make us desire the eternal happiness of our relatives, without desiring their reconciliation to God. We shall wish them to be forgiven, whether they repent or not. And when our hearts are brought under the reign of grace, we do not find ourselves divested of natural affection: we still have (and are not condemned for it) a peculiar concern for our “kindred according to the flesh.” But now it is our heart’s desire and prayer to God, that they may be saved, not merely from misery, but from sin, its guilty cause. See Rom. ix. 1—3, and x. 1. Sanctified natural affection will devoutly desire, that such as are endeared to us by the ties of nature, may love Him whom we esteem as altogether lovely; and thus become proper objects of complacency, not to us merely, but to Him.

If there is no disagreement between relative duties and *benevolence*, I think there can be none between these duties, and *any* Article of our experimental system. The other Articles all grow out of the first, as the branches of a tree do from its trunk. There is no reason to doubt, that the more any one has of holy love, the better prepared he is to discharge every duty of relative life. The more completely his heart is brought under the influence of that experimental religion which consists, not only in universal good will, but also in holy complacency, submission to God, repentance, faith, hope, humility, thirsting after righteousness, a spirit of forgiveness, self-denial, thankfulness, and such like gracious affections,—the more thoroughly will he be furnished unto all good works.

A right discharge of relative duties, can not but harmonize with the several *doctrines* which were exhibited in Part I. Doctrines are things to be believed, and duties are things to be done; and if both are correct and scriptural, they will fully accord. Now in what manner should the relative offices of life be performed, to have them harmonize with the holy doctrines of the Bible? From that sacred book we learn, that we are God’s creatures—exalted above all the other creatures of this lower world—made to glorify His holy name, by being subject to



his moral government. Now will not the belief that we have such a great and holy Creator—that we have such a high standing among his creatures—that he had such an important object in giving us existence—and that it is he who has established those interesting relations which we have been considering;—prepare us to feel that we have duties to discharge, growing out of those relations?

It is a cardinal doctrine of our creed, that Jesus came to save his people from their sins; and that to effect this, he sends the Spirit to renew and sanctify their hearts. What will be the effect of this doctrine on Christian practice? If it be cordially received, will not its purifying influence be felt in the family circle? It is another Article of our faith, that all our conduct, not excepting that which we exhibit before our families, is to be disclosed before the universe; and that, according as it may have been good or bad, it will draw forth from the Judge a sentence, which will ensure our endless bliss, or consign us to interminable woe. What manner of persons ought we, then, to be, in all holy conversation and godliness. In what a circumspcct manner should we discharge our relative duties, were the doctrine of eternal judgment to be deeply impressed on our hearts. What an influence it would have on rulers and people, instructors and pupils, preachers and hearers, husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, masters and servants!

#### REMARKS.

1. The forming of our voluntary relationships in society, calls for much consideration and prayer; since they always bring with them duties, for the discharge of which we shall be held responsible. He who becomes a ruler, is responsible for the discharge of the duties connected with his office. Surely then, it behooves him to think of something more than its honors and emoluments. To enter the holy ministry without deep thought and fervent prayer, would indicate a want of preparation for the discharge of its interesting duties. To form the marriage relation, is no trifling concern; since it imposes a new class of duties, which have an important bearing on the interests of this and the future world. The parties about to form such a connection, ought to think of these duties, and ask help from above in their performance. The birth of a child creates a new relation, and is an event of no minor importance. So it must be viewed by that parent who considers himself solemnly obligated to train up his child in the way it should go. When the most interesting and responsible relations of life are commenced with vain mirth and jollity, it seems to import an utter thoughtlessness concerning the solemn and responsible duties which these relations originate.

2. It behooves every individual to inquire what are the relations he sustains in society, and what the duties connected with them. By the tie of humanity, all are alike bound. Nor are there any who are not bound by some of the relative ties. But of these, some have more, and some less. Let each of us inquire, What are the relations I sustain? What are the duties connected with them? And how am I discharging these duties? Do I sustain the relation of ruler or citizen,

instructor or pupil, minister or hearer, husband or wife, parent or child, brother or sister, master or servant? What duties do my several relations require me to perform? and am I endeavoring to perform them? Is it an object with me to employ all the influence which I have acquired by relative ties, to promote the present and future happiness of those with whom I stand connected?

3. The tender connections of relative life, together with the responsible duties they impose, suggest one reason why we shrink back from death. These are tender ties; and death sunders them all. But had these connections involved no duties, their dissolution would not be so terrific. When the pastor perceives that he is about to be called away from his beloved flock, a sense of the intimate relation which has subsisted between him and them, makes it hard to part. But it would not be so hard, were he conscious that his pastoral duties had all been discharged. One thing which often distresses the dying parent is, a recollection of his criminal neglects, particularly as it relates to the religious education of his children; and now he sees there is no remedy for these neglects. Similar reflections are excited in the minds of parents, when the connection is broken by the death of their children. And cases have no doubt existed, where the grief of children under the loss of parents, has been greatly aggravated by the recollection of their unfilial treatment of them while they lived.—Since we know that these ties are all to be dissolved by death, let us faithfully discharge the duties connected with them, lest our neglects should serve to render the day of final separation peculiarly gloomy and distressing.

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### THIRD DIVISION.

#### PERSONAL DUTIES.

By *personal* duties, are meant those which every individual owes to himself. We are not only tolerated in the performance of such duties, but they are enjoined upon us. The command which is addressed to every man, requiring him to love his neighbor as himself, virtually requires him to love himself as his neighbor; and the command which enjoins it on him to do good to all men as he has opportunity, lays him under obligation to do good to himself, as one to whom his opportunities of usefulness are very peculiar. This object of his benevolent regard and effort, is always present wherever he goes. His own wants, both external and internal, are more intimately known, and can, in general, be more easily ministered to, than the wants of any other. Very many of the duties which every man is under obligation to perform through life, are such as he owes immediately to himself. The various kinds of duty which a man owes to his fellow men, he owes also to himself: besides others that are peculiar. In all the four ways

in which it was shown, under the head of General Duties, that we may benefit our fellow men, we can benefit ourselves.

1. As a man is under obligation to regard the person of his neighbor, so duty requires that he should regard his *own person*. “*Do thyself no harm*,” is obligatory on every man. God as much forbids self-murder and self-torture, as he forbids us to inflict these evils on one of our fellows. This is forbidden in the command, “Thou shalt not kill.” Every man is under obligation to use all lawful measures to preserve his own life and health. But if he has lost his health and earthly comforts, so that life is a burden to him, this gives him no right to despise his life and refuse to live. “Why does a *living* man complain?” Life is a blessing, even when bereaved of comforts; since it is the day of grace. Let every desponding soul adopt the resolution of the afflicted man of Uz; “All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come.” Job xiv. 14.

2. A man owes duties to himself as respects *property*. It is true that a man’s property is in his own hand, so as his neighbor’s is not; and there is an important sense in which a man may do what he will with his own property. “If he sweareth to his own hurt,” which is the same as to make a bargain to his own disadvantage, he not only may, but must abide by his contract; yet for him to compel his neighbor, in like circumstances, to abide by his, would be wrong. Ps. xv. 4. But a man has no right to squander or waste his property. Industry is a duty which a man owes to himself, as well as to his family and the public. The scriptures forbid him to be slothful in business: they frown on him for dealing with a slack hand, and for that profligacy which is a needless waste of his goods. They incite him to be diligent to know the state of his flocks, and to look well to his herds: also to gather up the fragments of his table that nothing be lost. See Rom. xii. 11. Prov. x. 4; xviii. 9; xxvii. 23. John vi. 12.

3. It is every man’s duty to regard his *own reputation*. He is under obligation to conduct in such a manner as to deserve a good name. In case his character is aspersed, it may become his duty to take some pains to remove the aspersion: for since the loss of a man’s character, proves the loss of his influence, it is consistent even with the most entire disinterestedness, to endeavor to retrieve it. Thus Paul took much pains, in one of his epistles to the Corinthian church, to vindicate himself from the unfounded charges alleged against him by his enemies. The Savior himself did the same. He said to the Jews, when they were about to stone him, “Many good works have I showed you of my Father: for which of those works do ye stone me?” And again he said, “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” While the primitive Christians gloried in their sufferings for the name of Christ, they were not willing to be under the imputation of suffering as evil-doers, or as busy-bodies in other men’s matters. 1 Pet. 14—16.

As a man has no liberty to reveal the faults of his neighbor, unless the public good requires it, so he has no right to publish his own failings. If they are already known to the public, it will be wrong for him to deny them. They may be faults of such a heinous nature, that duty will urge him to the most explicit and open confession. It was a relief



to the mind of David, to make that open confession of his sin which is the subject of the 51st Psalm. But when one's sins are known only to God, to him alone are they to be confessed; unless some injury done to our fellow men, which has hitherto been concealed, should render it our duty to confess to them also. By not understanding this part of personal duty, a man may indiscreetly injure his own reputation, and thus circumscribe his future usefulness.

4. A man is under obligation to attend to the concerns of his *own soul*. When compared with this, the personal duties which relate to his life, his property, and his reputation, sink into insignificance. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" There is no one thing more clearly revealed in the word of God, than that it is the duty of every individual to attend to the concerns of his own soul. The apostles, as ministers of reconciliation, warned and taught *every man* in all wisdom, that they might be able to present *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Now if it behooved them to take such pains for the salvation of every individual, was it not the duty of every individual to take equal pains for his own salvation? Could it be their duty to labor for his salvation, and not be his duty to do the same? Or were they, while laboring for the salvation of their hearers, under no obligation to labor for their own?—All souls are equally precious. *My* soul is as valuable as that of my neighbor. Why then should I be any less concerned for its salvation? There are the same reasons for seeking my own, as for seeking the salvation of my neighbor. Yea, there are some reasons why I should seek my own, more especially than the salvation of any other man.

1st. A man can know his own destitute and unregenerate state, so as he can not know his neighbor's. "Which shall know every man the plague of his own heart."

2dly. Every man has power to embrace the offer of salvation himself, but no power to cause others to embrace it. Lot's own ability to escape from the destruction of Sodom, did not enable him to effect the escape of his sons-in-law. Joshua could only urge it on all the congregation of the children of Israel to choose the Lord for their God; but he could actually make the choice. We have no power to repent and believe for our neighbors, and obtain for them the forgiveness of sin and justification unto life; but through grace we can repent and believe for ourselves, so as to insure the salvation of our own souls.

3dly. We can become acquainted with the character of our own religion, and the evidences of our conversion, so as we can not with those of any other man; and this circumstance lays us under obligation to pay the strictest attention to our own spiritual concerns. "What man," saith the apostle, "knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man that is in him?" In view of this fact, every individual is urged to attend to the examination of his own heart: "Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." To make our calling and election sure, is eminently a personal duty, and one from which we can never claim exemption.

4thly. As we have power to embrace religion for ourselves, in distinction from doing it for our neighbors, so it is with regard to per-

*severing* in it. We can exhort others to persevere and endure to the end, but it is only our own souls that we can keep in the love of God. "Keep *yourselves* in the love of God." It is only our own heart that we can keep with all diligence. Divine grace, we know, is necessary for the performance of every duty : but divine grace will not enable me to keep the heart of another, as it will to keep my own.

5thly. Our own salvation is a thing we can attend to at all times, and in all places. The salvation of no other individual is placed so much within my reach, as my own. And all these peculiar opportunities of doing good to my own soul, bring with them corresponding obligations. If the soul of another man could be placed as much within my power and sphere of action, it might have similar claims on me. But this can not be.

6thly. A man is *responsible* for his own soul, in such a manner as he is not for the soul of any other. It is asserted in the word of truth, that "every man shall give account of *himself* to God." There is a sense in which we are responsible for the souls of others, but it is not in the same sense that we are for our own. The ministers of Christ are said to watch for souls, as those who must give account ; but they are accountable for nothing but their own faithfulness. Should their faithful messages fail to save their hearers, still they themselves will be glorious in the eyes of the Lord : but whoever, whether preacher or hearer, does not himself cordially receive the gospel message, will be unable to stand in the judgment. Since the exercises and actions of each individual are his own, and not another's, every one is under the most solemn obligation to see to it, that they should be such as will meet the approbation of the Judge. "Prepare to meet thy God," is a command which comes to us with peculiar emphasis in our individual capacity, since it is in this capacity we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Every thing in reason and scripture, urges us to attend to our own souls. Here is an intelligent, immortal being, called *myself*, with whom I am necessarily always present, and whose character I am capable of discerning, even to the thoughts and intents of the heart ; whose movements and actions I direct, and for all of which I am accountable. By the light of revelation and by an actual acquaintance, I learn that this being is possessed of an unlovely character ; that he is now under the displeasure of the Almighty, and exposed to a continuance of that displeasure through all future duration. But the same blessed book which reveals my sin and misery, lets me know that my unlovely character can be changed, the displeasure of the Almighty be removed, and his favor be enjoyed world without end. What ought I to do for myself ? Does not even *reason* dictate, that I am bound to make unwearied efforts to rescue from sin and ruin, this part of the Creator's work, over which I have such special control, and for which I am so peculiarly responsible ? Surely, if I have a right to suffer this creature, *myself*, to perish uncared for, whose salvation shall I be under obligation to seek ?

And what saith the scripture on this point ? "Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver *every man his soul*." Jer. li. 6. "Save *yourselves* from this untoward generation." Acts ii. 40.

'This was as much as to say, If you can not reclaim this untoward generation, do not perish with them, but see to it, every one of you, that you save yourselves from their sins and their ruin. The last invitation which stands on record in the word of God, seems to be purposely addressed to every individual sinner: "And whosoever will, let *him* take of the water of life freely." The scriptures make it the duty of Christian ministers to seek their own salvation, as well as that of their hearers. Paul enjoined it upon the elders of the church of Ephesus, to take heed to *themselves*, as well as to the flock of God over which they were made overseers. And to his son Timothy he said, "Take heed to thyself, and unto thy doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this, thou shalt both *save thyself* and them that hear thee." In regard to himself, he says, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest by any means, when I have preached to others, *I myself should be a cast-away*."

Inattention to one's own spiritual concerns, is every where spoken against in the word of God. Divine wisdom makes this open proclamation, "Whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his *own soul*. All they that hate me, love death." The Savior said, "What is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world and lose *himself*, or be cast away?" His teaching was calculated to make this impression on his hearers, that it was the duty of each individual to make sure of his own salvation, let others do as they might. When one of his hearers said unto him, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" his reply to him was, "Strive to enter in at the straight gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." This was as much as to warn him, and indeed every other man, in view of the many and fatal mistakes which are made concerning religion, to use the utmost caution in regard to his own spiritual concerns. It was the same as to tell him to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure.

The point being established, that a man is under obligation to do something for his own good, and especially for the good of his soul, I would mention the following among the duties which every man is bound to perform, that he may keep himself unspotted from the world. All personal duties are comprised in living *soberly*, or in a conscientious government of one's own tempers and actions. I shall now speak only of that part of sober living which relates to external actions.

First. Sober living is the opposite of *levity in speech and behavior*. Such levity indicates a frivolous mind, and tends to sink the man into the child. We are wont to attach peculiar dignity to that child who rises above levity. Therefore, even young men are in the scriptures exhorted to be sober-minded. Foolish talking and jesting are condemned as not convenient; not fit and proper for creatures who have not a word upon their tongue which is not altogether known in heaven, and for which they will not be required to give account in the day of judgment. In relation to all that frivolity, which is condemned by the letter or spirit of the scriptures, it is the duty of every one to "show himself *a man*."

Secondly. *Temperance in meats and drinks* is a duty which every



man owes to himself; and without temperance he can not live soberly. This, as well as all other personal duties, we owe to society; since we can not be good members of society without it: but by neglecting it, we first wrong ourselves. By intemperance, especially in the use of strong drink, a man makes a dreadful assault on himself; on his health, and even life; on his property, his reputation; and, what crowns the whole, he takes the readiest way to destroy his own soul. Every man is under obligation to himself, to do all in his power to preserve the place in the creation which has been assigned him by his benevolent Creator; and his is the place of an intelligent creature. But the drunkard seems voluntarily to abdicate his throne, and to give up his elevated station for one which is below that of the irrational animals. In view of our own well-being, both in this and the future world, we are powerfully urged to be temperate in all things; and where the religion of the gospel has taken possession of the heart, a temperate life will be the result.

Thirdly. *Chastity* is a personal duty, and is as necessarily comprehended in living *soberly*, as it is in living righteously and godly. No man can be said to keep himself unspotted from the world, who "walks after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness." There is not a more debasing and soul-destroying sin on earth. The feelings of our Creator towards it, may be learned from one of the commands which he wrote with his own finger on the tables of stone. And how pointedly did our Savior condemn all approximations towards an open transgression of the seventh commandment. Matt. v. 28. Every thing in a man's behavior, words, and even thoughts, contrary to the most rigid purity, is not only offensive to God, but is also a sin against himself—against both soul and body. When the apostle had said, in one of his epistles, "Flee fornication," he enforces the injunction with this remark: "Every sin that a man doth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication, sinneth against *his own body*." 1 Cor. vi. 18.

While the scriptures sanction marriage, and declare that it is honorable in all, they assure us that whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. The heinousness of this sin can not be too deeply impressed on our minds. It can not be too deeply impressed on the minds of the young. It is eminently a "youthful lust;" and one of those from which they are commanded to flee. Here is a place where their adversary the devil, who, like a roaring lion, is seeking to devour them, will assume the character of their friend, and ply his temptations with peculiar art. This "pleasure of sin" he will strip of its filthy rags, and array it in a fascinating dress. But let them dispel the charm by calling to mind what God, their real friend, has said on this subject. Let the young man remember that God has said, "Whoso committeth adultery with a woman, lacketh understanding; he that doeth it, destroyeth *his own soul*." Let him also remember the passage of scripture in which this interesting question, "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way?" is thus answered—"By taking heed thereto according to thy word." And let the young female remember what the scripture says concerning the wanton woman: "But she that liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth." Let all remember the example of young Joseph, and, whenever temptation assails them, say with

him, "How shall we do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Gen. xxxix. 9.

Fourthly. The *improvement of time* may be ranked among the personal duties. The command given us, to *redeem the time*, implies something more than an obligation to be industrious, for the purpose of accumulating property, or of supplying the wants of our families; it imposes an obligation on the rich, as well as on the poor, on the hoary-headed, as well as on men in the vigor of their days. Every man owes it to himself, (if his obligations extended no further,) to fill up the whole of his short probation in doing something; something, too, which will not only tend to promote the general good, but be calculated to expand his own mind, and purify his heart, and thus prepare him for the employments and pleasures of the heavenly state. The gospel, when received into the heart, creates such a principle of action, that no man under its influence can be idle, and yet feel himself innocent. He may be innocent without laboring in the field or the shop; or without laboring anywhere else with his hands; but unless he is conscious that he is endeavoring to improve his time to some good purpose, and in such a way as he believes will meet the approbation of God, he will feel himself guilty.

It is not the legitimate influence of religion on the heart, to cause a man to pursue recreation and amusement as a *business*. Religion considers amusements to be lawful, only as means for qualifying us to pursue things of greater importance; and therefore reprobates all such as have a contrary tendency. It says of that laughter, which is the happiness of the gay world, it is mad, and of their mirth, what doth it? The Christian and the man of pleasure, are very different characters. The Christian feels that the obligation he is under to himself, over and above his obligation to God and the interests of his kingdom, forbid him to waste away life in a round of vain amusements; going from the theatre to the circus, and from the circus to the dance, and from the dance to the card table, and from this to the party, and so on, until his Lord shall come. He looks at this round of folly, and if he has ever been so thoughtless as to pursue it himself, he makes the hearty confession: "I have sinned and perverted that which was right, and it profited it me not." It is now an affecting consideration to his mind, that the probation of creatures who are under the wrath of God, and who must repent, and that very soon, or perish forever, should be filled up in a way so calculated to prevent their ever repenting and being saved. Christians are commanded to come out from among the wicked and be separate, and not be conformed to the world; but surely, such as go with the world in all these vanities, have not obeyed the command. Let us only feel the obligation resting on us to redeem our time, and this alone will decide the point, that these fascinating and empty amusements should form no part of the employment of our lives.

The redeeming of time will lead us not only to avoid things which are pernicious and frivolous, but to employ ourselves in those which are improving to our own minds, and calculated to render us useful to others. Besides attending to the business of our calling, and the stated devotions of the day, we may prevent the fragments of our time from being lost, by devoting them to useful reading, (especially to the

study of the scriptures and books of piety,) and to more immediate converse with Him who heareth prayer. In this way can the superannuated improve those last remains of life, which would otherwise be vacant and tedious. And are not both men and women, who have reached an advanced age, under obligation to devote an extraordinary proportion of their time to the exercise of reading and prayer? They are now becoming incapable of the labors of this life, but not of the exercises of religion. Even when the infirmities of age are so multiplied that they are chiefly confined to their own habitations, they can still cultivate piety in their own hearts, and pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Let aged Christians anticipate the employments of heaven, and be much in the mount, holding converse with God. It will make their wrinkled faces shine, and cause them to bring forth fruit in old age. And will not this be the best means of preparing them for a peaceful, if not a triumphant death?

How much more worthily do they conduct who thus improve the leisure of old age, than they do, who are always teasing themselves about those goods of time, which in a very few days they must leave, to enjoy no more forever: or, than those who are seen in places of public resort, exciting the laughter of fools by telling them ludicrous stories. Yea, how much more worthily do they conduct than those of their own age, who occupy their time in light reading; such as novels and romances; or who will, perhaps, be seen poring over all the gazettes which come within their reach, eagerly entering into all the party politics of the day, which the light of another world will show to have been the merest vanity. O that aged men of this description, could but feel the force of such divine admonitions as these: "Redeeming the time." "The time is short." "But the end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." And let the young be reminded, that to be prepared for a useful and happy old age, they must redeem from misspense the morning of their life.

Let it not be thought that too much has been said on the obligation of improving time; since on its proper improvement every thing depends. Time is a precious gift, dealt out to us in moments; and each must be improved while it is passing, or it will be forever beyond our reach. The gift of one moment does not insure the gift of another; and yet on the improvement of a single moment, may be suspended an eternity of blessedness. Let these thoughts have their due influence, and we shall dread to incur the guilt of *slothfulness*, as we should that of some heinous crime. In view of the obligation every one is under to improve his time to the best advantage, it will not appear to him a matter of indifference whether he rise early or late in the morning. "Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread." This proverb is manifestly designed to encourage early rising; and this practice is no less important in relation to spiritual, than temporal things.



## THE DIVISION HARMONIZED.

The personal duties are in harmony one with another. There is no discord between the different branches of personal duty. The life is more than meat, and the body than raiment; therefore, life and health are not to be sacrificed to procure sumptuous fare and costly apparel. A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and is therefore never to be sacrificed for the sake of acquiring them. And as the interests of time are infinitely outweighed by those of eternity, we are under obligation to treat them accordingly; we should be ready to part with them all for the pearl of great price. Men not unfrequently repute him a fool, who makes it not his aim to amass earthly treasure; but in God's account, *he* is the veriest fool, who makes no provision for his soul: "But God said unto him," (that is, to the man who had laid up many years' provision for the body,) "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" The Christian is required to abstain from fleshly lusts, (that is, from such a gratification of his animal propensities as is sinful,) because they war against the soul. From all these lusts he must abstain; else there can be no consistency in his religion. How inconsistent, and how deficient in the duties he owes to himself, would *he* be, who should abstain from one branch of intemperance, but indulge himself in the other; or who should abstain from both drunkenness and gluttony, but walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness. And should he avoid these scandalous sins, and yet idle away his life in a round of fashionable amusements and parties of pleasure, he could not be said to keep himself unspotted from the world; and therefore could have no reason to think himself possessed of that religion which is pure and undefiled before God and the Father.

There is no discord between personal and *relative* duties. Religion does not allow one to set up his own interest in opposition to that of his family, and to sacrifice their comfort to his own caprice. A right understanding and performance of the duties he owes to himself, will render him better qualified to discharge the various duties that pertain to the family state. That man who neglects his own soul, will most certainly neglect the souls of his family. If he does not pray for himself, he will not pray for them; if he does not read the word of God, he will not teach his children to read it; if he does not sanctify the Sabbath, he will allow them to profane it; and if he lays up his treasure on the earth, he will not urge them to lay up theirs in heaven. Instead, therefore, of personal duties being a hindrance to the discharge of those which are relative, the former prepare the way for the latter. When the apostle was about to urge relative duties on the Ephesian elders, he first urges those that were personal, as being a necessary preparation for the former: "*Take heed to yourselves*, and to all the flock." This same address may with propriety be made to parents, in view of the duties which they owe to their offspring: "*Take heed to yourselves*, and to all the children which God has entrusted to your care."

Attention to personal duties will make children *filial*, just as it will make parents *parental*. When we see children evince insubordination to parental government, do we not necessarily infer that these children are neglecting their own souls? And as a proper attention to the duties they owe themselves, will make them better sons and daughters, so will it make them better brothers and sisters. A right apprehension and a faithful discharge of their personal duties, will prevent collisions, and cause them to treat each other affectionately, not only in childhood, but during life.

What has now been said of the happy influence of personal duties on the relations of the family, will apply to all the other relations which exist in society. They who are most attentive to personal duties, will make the best rulers and subjects, the best instructors and pupils, the best pastors and congregations.

If we can discover an agreement between the duties we owe ourselves, and those we owe to such as we are connected with by relative ties, there will be no difficulty in discovering their agreement with the duties which we owe to society at large. These duties are entirely harmonious. If I seek my own good in a selfish manner, this is at war with seeking the common good of man: but duty forbids me to seek my own good in this way. When a man seeks his own good selfishly, he regards himself as of more consequence, not only than any one of his neighbors, but of more than all of them. God as much forbids selfishness in the discharge of the duties which a man owes himself, as in the discharge of any others. Personal duties, then, if performed in the spirit of the divine requirements, do not at all interfere with the discharge of general duties.

No man is under obligation to regard his own interest, either temporal or eternal, above its real and comparative value. He is bound to possess universal and impartial benevolence, and to manifest this by doing good to all men as he has opportunity. And since he has greater opportunity to do good to himself than to others, his obligation to do it is proportionably augmented. Tho' many of the duties of an individual consist in a proper care of his own body and soul, still he has no right, in any instance, to set up his private interest in opposition to that of the public. "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth." A man's own wealth must not be sought exclusively, and never in opposition to the wealth of the nation; nor is he ever to balance his own happiness against that of the world. The divine command, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*, balances his happiness with that of a single individual.\*

\* Some may imagine, that in the precept, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*, the connecting word *as* is not intended to describe an equal degree of love to our neighbor as to ourselves, but only a similarity of affection. This, however, is not its natural import; nor is such an interpretation most consistent: for what reason, except a selfish one, can be assigned why a man should not love his neighbor *as much* as himself, if he is equal to him in a capacity to do and enjoy good? If the law of God allows me to love my neighbor less than myself, I should need to be told how much less. In this case, we should want a new rule to regulate the exercise of our love. If the law of God were to allow a man to love himself more than his neighbor, merely because it was himself, would it not legalize the principle of *selfishness*, which, in a more universal sense than even the love of money, is the root of all evil? If a man is tolerated in exercising more of the love of good will to himself, merely as self, why may he not, for

In proportion to the zeal with which we seek the salvation of our own souls, will be the ardor with which we shall seek the salvation of our fellow men. True religion has nothing monopolizing in its tendency. It prompts its possessors to say to all those to whom they have access, "O taste and see that the Lord is good." If it be asked, who are most engaged to have the religion of the gospel universally diffused, it may be answered, they who are most desirous to have its influence thoroughly pervade their own souls.

Personal duties harmonize with the duties of *godliness*. To live *soberly*, prepares the way to live *godly*. The man who neglects the means appointed to promote his own sanctification and enjoyment of God, will neglect all the duties of godliness: but he who faithfully uses these means, will walk humbly with God. The most thorough application of the divinely prescribed means of promoting one's own happiness, will lead to the *first* particular in this class of duties, namely, *the worship of God*. He prays, because he would give unto the Lord the glory due to his name; also, because his necessities drive him to the mercy-seat. To restrain prayer, would seem to the Christian to be as inconsistent with his taking proper care of himself, as to neglect to eat his bread or put on his apparel.—Nor can he be faithful to himself, without seeking to become acquainted with that *inspired word*, which was given to be a light to his path through this dark world. A suitable regard to his own good, will excite him both to read and hear the word.—There certainly can be no disagreement between a man's seeking his own best good, and his *keeping holy the Sabbath day*; for the Sabbath was made for man—not for his observance only, but for his benefit. There is no other day of the week so essential to man's good, as that day which the Lord has hallowed and set apart for himself. Nor is there any way in which we can spend its sacred hours so advantageously to ourselves, as in that very way prescribed in the fourth commandment—that very way that does most to honor the Lord of the Sabbath.—The *making a profession of godliness*, does not interfere with a single injunction relating to our own personal interests. The church is called a commonwealth; and it is enjoined upon all its officers and members not to look on their own things, (that is, exclusively,) but to look also on the things of others. The constitution prescribed to this spiritual commonwealth, manifestly forbids all selfishness in its members. But he who gives up his selfish interest for this common interest, will have more enjoyment in seeking a common good, than he could possibly receive in any other way.—There was *another* duty of godliness specified, namely, *the consecration of a portion of our property to the service of God*, for the purpose of supplying the wants of the poor, supporting the ministers of Christ, and furnishing the means of widely extending his empire of holiness. They who have identified the duties they owe to themselves with selfishness, will be apt to imagine that devoting property to the Lord, is at variance with that *personal* obligation which

the same reason, exercise more of the love of complacency towards his own character, because it is his own? But would not this be in repugnance to the apostle's direction to every man among us, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think? Again he said, "Let each esteem other better than himself."



every man is under, to take care of his substance and see that it be not wasted. But let him be reminded, that of all the uses of property, the one just specified is the last which should be deemed a waste of it. Property thus devoted, is seed sown in a fruitful soil. A harvest of good will be produced; and he who sows the seed, (provided he does it heartily to the Lord,) will receive a rich share of the harvest. See 2 Cor. ix. 10, Eccl. xi. 1, 2.

It is conceded, that there is no harmony between a selfish attention to our personal concerns, and the service of God. The man who layeth up treasure for *himself*, that is, makes himself his ultimate end, can not be rich towards God. But it is not at variance with disinterestedness, or unfeigned piety, that he should value his own happiness at as high a rate as God does. As seeking the best good of our fellow men, is in accordance with love and obedience to God, so it is with the performance of the duties we owe to ourselves. In both cases, the good of the creature should be made subordinate to the glory of the Creator.

To show the harmony between personal duties, and those holy affections which constitute the religion of the heart, I need not advert to more than two or three Articles of the experimental series. If we can discover an agreement between personal duties and the *first*, *third*, and *tenth* of those Articles, there can remain no doubt that the harmony is complete. Let us see whether the duties in question accord with the subject of the first Article, namely, benevolence.

Universal good-will must include good-will to myself, since I constitute a part of the universe. True benevolence is regardless of no part with which it is made acquainted. Ps. cxlv. 9. Our minds are so limited, that we have very imperfect conceptions of the extent of the universe. We can not be affected with the interests of creatures, whose existence is problematical, or whose mere existence is all we know, as we can with the interests of those whose circumstances are not only known to us, but are capable of being meliorated by efforts that we can make. Our services are due to those creatures that are placed within our sphere of action. Hence it is, that without saying a word against the disinterestedness of benevolence, or in favor of partial affection, we can teach that we owe duties to our own world, which we do not to other parts of creation; that we owe duties to our own country, which are peculiar; also, to the city, town, or congregation in which we live; still more, to our own families, in distinction from the families of our neighbors: and lastly, that we owe duties to ourselves, which we do not owe to the other members of our families. By conceding this, we do not say that selfishness is right; or that the law of God tolerates the least degree of it. All Christians have more or less selfishness: but so far from deeming it a virtue, they confess it as a sin, and as furnishing evidence that they are sanctified only in part. But they do not confess that all the attention they pay to themselves—to their own bodies and souls, is selfish and therefore sinful. On the contrary, the neglect of their personal, no less than of their other duties, is very often the means of humbling them before God.

Some may think there is no consistency in one's making such efforts for his own salvation, after he has *unconditionally submitted himself*

to God. [See Part II. Art. III.] Submission to God can not be too unconditional. But I trust there is nothing in the personal duties that have been inculcated, which stands opposed to the most entire submission. Suppose you have a child that is sick?—ought you not to feel entirely submissive to God about its recovery? But when you have exercised such submission, have you no other duties to perform? Must you now cease to pray for the child's recovery? Are you to discontinue the use of medicine? No: your submission, if it be genuine, will have no tendency to make you relax in your efforts to effect the recovery of the child; for your submitting this matter to God, did not imply that it ceased to be an object of your earnest desire.

Let this illustration help us understand the subject before us. If you have not only been convinced that you deserve to be punished forever for your sins; but if you have felt that you would approve of the justice of God, in case he should see fit to inflict the deserved punishment, it still remains your duty to seek to be saved. Certainly, you can have no right to refuse to repent of your sins and believe on the Son of God. These duties you owe to God; and these duties you owe to yourself; for there is a promise that if you do repent, you shall be forgiven, and if you believe, you shall be saved. While you have a right, and are under obligation, to submit your body and soul to the disposal of the Most High, you have no right to neglect either soul or body; and certainly not the *soul*. It is still your duty to provide for your bodily wants; and especially is it incumbent on you to labor for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life; and to fear, lest a promise being left of entering into his rest, you should seem to come short of it.

The duties we owe to ourselves, ought not to be considered as at variance with the spirit of *self-denial*; which makes the *tenth* Article in our experimental series. Self-denial does not discourage the performance of one of these duties. It stands opposed to selfishness, and will therefore lead us to make personal sacrifices for the good of others. The apostles made a sacrifice of property, reputation, bodily ease and comfort, and even of life, for the benefit of their fellow sinners. But all this did not imply a neglect of personal duties. Paul informs us, that God had given him such a spirit of self-denial, that he could have consented to be accursed from Christ, for the sake of that multitude of his Jewish brethren who were about to perish in unbelief; and yet we know that this high degree of self-denial did not render him inattentive to the concerns of his own soul. He still pressed toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. If he had not done so, he would have given no suitable proof of the sincerity of his professed anxiety for the salvation of his kinsmen.

Personal duties are in harmony with the *doctrines* of truth. They harmonize with our *first* doctrinal Article—the existence of an infinite God. Duty to myself does not make it necessary that I should forget Him, or balance my interests against His. Our *second* Article is this; that God made, and is managing, all things for his own glory. If God made all things, I am one of his creatures. Though created *by* him, I constitute no part of him: I have individuality, and am totally distinct from my Creator. He is good in himself, and is doing good;

therefore in seeking his own glory, he seeks the good of his creatures, and my good among the rest; for his tender mercies are over all his works. Now one important way in which he seeks my good, is by informing me by what means I myself ought to seek it. He lets me know that it would disturb the harmony of the system, and be altogether improper for me to make myself the ultimate end of my actions; since I am so infinitely little in comparison with my Creator, and so inconsiderable a part of his creation. He requires me and every other intelligent creature, to make a common interest with himself—to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. To seek his righteousness, is to seek a personal conformity to his moral image: and this is done by all who seek first the kingdom of God; that is, who make it their chief end to advance its holy interests. And this agrees with the *third* Article of the doctrinal series, which represents the Supreme Being as establishing a moral government over the intelligent creation. All his rational creatures are required to possess a holy character. To possess such a character, is a duty they owe to the eternal King, to their fellow subjects, and to themselves.

The *next* Article in our doctrinal series, relates to the fall of man. By the fall, man withdrew allegiance from his Creator, and became an enemy to his fellow creatures. And though he did not cease to love himself, his love lost its *dutiful* character, and he wronged his own soul. “O Israel, thou hast destroyed *thyself*,” is applicable to every transgressor of the divine law.

The *next two* Articles present to our view an atonement, provided for the children of Adam, and freely offered to every one who comes within the sound of the gospel. And does not this ample provision for our redemption, and this kind offer, lay every one of us under obligation to return to God through Jesus Christ? And does not every one owe this duty to himself, as well as to the merciful Redeemer? If our country were visited with sore famine, and we were dying with hunger, should some one, at great pains and peril, procure and present us a supply of food, would not duty, both to our benefactor and to ourselves, require us to eat and live?

The doctrines contained in the *eighth, ninth, and tenth* Articles, exhibit the distinguishing grace that is displayed in the conversion of sinners. But there is nothing in these doctrines calculated to make us neglect personal duties—nothing to destroy the force of those commands which require *all* men to believe on the Son of God and be saved. These discriminating doctrines do not impose an obligation on a part of the race to neglect their duty, and, sluggard-like, to sleep away their day of grace. They do not suppose the non-elect to be discharging any duty, by continuing in impenitence and unbelief, and thus losing their souls. But while these doctrines, when properly understood, have no tendency to make the despisers of gospel grace feel innocent in the neglect of the duties they owe themselves, they are calculated to render grateful them who, like the son in the parable, at first refused to go and work in their father’s vineyard, but afterwards repented and went. Though even these did not commence their attention to religion, from any knowledge or belief of their own election, but rather from a conviction of their needy condition; yet they now



ascribe that conviction and the change which ensued, to that distinguishing goodness of God which these doctrines assert. May we not show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light, and yet not be considered as thereby furnishing an excuse for them who abide still in darkness, and prefer it to light, because their deeds are evil?

The obligation to personal duties accords with the doctrine of a general judgment, in which every man must give account of himself to God. Every individual of the race must stand before God in judgment, and receive a sentence of approbation or condemnation which shall never be revoked. And this sentence will be according to the character which is formed in this life. Can any one consider this fundamental Article in the Christian scheme, and not feel that he has personal duties to perform? All which others can do for him, will fail of preparing him for this solemn account, should he neglect a personal attention to the concerns of his soul. Let the doctrine of a general judgment have its practical influence, and its tendency will be powerful in constraining us to take heed to ourselves. We know this was its influence on the holy apostles. "Wherefore we labor," say they, "that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

#### REMARKS.

1. In view of this Division of our practical system, we are led to remark upon the important difference between one's taking care of himself from selfish motives, and his doing it as a part of his *duty*. That man who is influenced by selfish motives in preserving his life, may, without any change of character, become a suicide: but he who preserves his life as a matter of duty, will never feel that he has a right to leave his post till he is called away by Him who placed him there. He who is governed by nothing better than selfish motives in preserving his health, may sacrifice it to his intemperate desires, when they plead hard to be gratified. They who are industrious from selfish motives, may from similar motives become idle: but that industry which results from a sense of obligation to God, will not be exchanged for idleness. There is a great difference between that vindication of one's character which is prompted by self-love, and that which is undertaken from love to God and a desire for usefulness. A man who is so sensitive as to expose his life in a single combat, in defense of his sullied reputation, may afterwards rob himself of every thing like a reputable character, by indulging in the most degrading vices. His sensibility and insensibility proceed from a common source. So, that man who has once been zealously engaged in seeking salvation, but merely for the sake of securing his own happiness, may after all this not only neglect that salvation, but treat it with entire contempt.

Let no man think that he discharges that class of duties which are personal, merely because he loves himself and seeks his own happi-

ness. Duties of every sort suppose that there exists a fundamental difference between right and wrong; and they imply an obligation to do right and to avoid doing wrong. The rule of right applies as much to what we are to do directly for our own good, as to that which we are to do for the good of others. The authority of God is to be acknowledged in the one case, as much as in the other. We are not our own, even when we are attending to our own concerns and providing for ourselves. There is One whose we are, and whom it is our duty to serve. When we are engaged in personal duties, our motives should not terminate upon ourselves; but even now we should seek to qualify ourselves the better to glorify God in our body, and in our spirit, which are His.

2. In this Division of second table duties, every man finds something for himself to do, and something to do for *himself*. There are many things, as we have seen, that he can do for himself more conveniently than any other can do for him; and some there are, which, if he does not do for himself, must forever be left undone. And this latter class are such as are altogether indispensable to his well being. A holy character, preserved or recovered, is essential to the well being of every intelligent creature. Without it, he can be neither amiable nor happy. Without it, he must be at variance with that holy dominion that ruleth over all; nor can he have peace within his own breast. Rational existence, in connection with a holy character, is a blessing; but if not connected with such a character, it will prove a curse. And there is no way by which holiness of character can be possessed and maintained, except by the performance of personal duties. Whatever may be done by our fellow creatures, or by our Creator, for us, does not render them unnecessary. Our Creator can afford us more immediate and effectual aid than all creatures combined; for he can work in us both to will and to do; but this does by no means render our own efforts unnecessary; it is still indispensable to our salvation, that we ourselves should will and do the things which are commanded us of God. Though dependent, we are nevertheless voluntary agents, and must be active in the performance of every duty. If our duties be not done by us, and if they be not done heartily to the Lord, we shall fall under the condemnation of the slothful servant who hid his Lord's money.

Let every one who has arrived at this part of our practical system, pause and ask himself, whether he is conscientiously discharging that class of duties which relate to himself, and particularly to his immortal interests. Let him say, Here is an intelligent being whom I call *myself*—the only being whose actions render *me* lovely or unlovely, well or ill-deserving; the only being for whose actions I am in the fullest sense accountable. This being, I am assured, is now in a state of merciful probation. To me, among others, is the grace of God sent; and I am cautioned not to receive it in vain. I am reminded that if I am wise, I shall be wise for myself, but if I scorn, that I alone shall bear it. Have I acted the part of wisdom, by fleeing for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before me? If I have not, what am I resolving to do? Shall I be so unnatural as to neglect the duties which I owe to myself—to my better part? Shall I suffer my soul, *my own*

*soul*, to be lost, through a careless inattention to the demands it makes upon me? For its iniquities I am responsible; and if the whole moral system condemn these iniquities, it exerts no influence to rescue my soul from the curse of the law, unless I also condemn them. Shall I, by holding fast deceit and neglecting to wash in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, suffer my soul to remain forever under the dominion of sin, and the holy displeasure of the almighty Ruler of the universe? “Awake,” O my soul, “awake to righteousness and sin not;” otherwise iniquity will be thy ruin!

### A RETROSPECT OF PART III.

I. FROM the view which has now been taken of holy practice, we are forcibly led to this conclusion; that it is essential to the system of truth—that it is a part of religion *without which none can be saved*. The scriptures make it as necessary to salvation, that the life should be reformed, as that the heart should be renewed; that sin should be forsaken, as that it should be repented of; that there should be good works, as that there should be faith. Indeed, good works are considered as the only satisfactory proof that our faith is any better than that of devils. The faith which is not evinced by good works, is represented as dead, while a living faith goes forth into such works, and is thereby distinguished from its counterfeit. Jam. ii. 17—26.

The Creator established such a connection between our souls and bodies, that the members of the body are governed by the volitions of the soul. If the soul wishes the hand to rise, it rises; the foot to move, it moves, and in the direction which is wished; and the tongue to speak, it speaks, and utters the words which are required of it. Nothing could be more absurd, than to suppose that the soul has become renewed and cleansed, while yet the body keeps on in its old, filthy course, unaffected with the change which has taken place in the inward man. How absurd, to suppose a man’s heart adores his Maker, while his tongue profanes his name; that his heart sanctifies the Sabbath, while his actions profane it; that his heart is in the house of the Lord with his people, while his feet have carried him to a party of pleasure among the irreligious and profane. We are assured by an apostle, that if any man seem to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, his religion is vain; but such a conclusion could not be fairly drawn, were it not that the heart had control of the tongue. The Bible considers an external profanation of the Sabbath, as the most decisive evidence that we do not heartily reverence the day; and our forsaking the assembling of ourselves together with God’s people, as full proof that our hearts are not with them. *Our actions are always considered as the best index of our character.* It is so in relation to our



character as Christians. *Doing* the will of God, is made higher evidence of our interest in Christ, than anything else, because it is the whole system of truth perfected. It supposes the truth has been *believed* and *loved*, and now it is acted out. The best proof a man can give, that he believes and loves the truth, is to regulate all his actions by it.

A change of heart effects a greater alteration in the lives of some, than of others. The heart of every man is equally in need of a renovation; for all hearts are by nature entirely depraved: but every man's external conduct is not equally out of rule, and therefore a renovation of heart will produce a greater alteration in some men than in others. But the internal change, according to the degree of its perfection, will in every instance effect an alteration in the external conduct, in proportion as such an alteration is needed. When idolaters have had their hearts changed, they have turned from idols to the service of the living and true God. 1 Thess. i. 9. When magicians, who had gained their living by diabolical arts, have been renewed in their mind, they have renounced these arts, and destroyed their books. Acts xix. 19. When Saul, the Pharisee and the persecutor, became a regenerated man, he not only gave up his Pharisaic system of doctrines for the truth as it is in Jesus, but also ceased to persecute the Christians, and preached the faith which he once destroyed.

The internal change, in some instances, takes place so late in a man's life, as to afford but little time for it to be evinced by an external reformation. This was the case with the penitent thief, whose conversion preceded his death by but a few minutes. But late as it was, even he gave some evidence of its genuineness, by a change in his external conduct. He left off reviling the Savior; (for it is evident that both the thieves were at first united in this thing;) he reproved his fellow for continuing to do it; he acknowledged the justice of his own condemnation; openly avowed his belief in the divine mission of Him who was then dying for a guilty world; and committed his eternal interests into His almighty hands. Had this convert lived, he would most certainly have been an entirely different man from what he was before. He would have stolen no more, but would rather have labored, working with his hands. Eph. iv. 28. He would have evidenced that merciful change which was wrought within him, by a life of piety towards God and uprightness towards men.

II. In review of this Part of our work, it is easy to see, why the scriptures represent *a life of disobedience as being sufficient to annul every claim to the character of piety*. If any urge a claim to be the children of faithful Abraham, while their works are unlike to his, their claim is disallowed. John viii. 33, 39, 40. The highest claims to the favor of the Judge, are represented as set aside by this single circumstance, that the men who make them are *workers of iniquity*. Matt. vii. 21—23. The man who hears the sayings of Christ and *does them not*—no matter what he believes, nor how many happy feelings are within his breast—builds his hopes upon the sand. Matt. vii. 26. The apostle James represents those professed Christians, whose practice was not conformed to the word of truth, as men who deceived themselves. Jam. i. 22. The apostle John informs us, that if we say we

have fellowship with God, and walk in darkness, (that is, moral darkness,) we lie and do not the truth. And Paul says, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap: for he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption.” Gal. vi. 7, 8.

But is it not true, that all who are born of the Spirit will enter into the kingdom of God? Most certainly; but not all who think they have experienced this change. And an unchanged life is full proof of an unchanged heart: for “a good tree can not bring forth evil fruit.” Matt. vii. 18. They who habitually do the lusts of the devil, are manifestly his children. John viii. 44. 1 John, iii. 10.

III. In this retrospect of the practical system, it may be useful to show wherein the obedience of *Christians differs from that of all other creatures on earth and in heaven.*

First. The obedience of true Christians differs from that of all other men upon earth. The difference consists in these three things:

1st. There is an *inward and holy principle* to their obedience. They have not only clean hands, but a *pure heart*. They not only *do good*, but *are good*. They walk uprightly, and they are upright in heart. They love God, as well as keep his commandments. They not only do their neighbors good, but they love them, even when their love is not reciprocated. Their love is of a more excellent nature than that which actuates other men. “The righteous is *more excellent* than his neighbor.” This is the testimony of that God who searches all hearts, and is no respecter of persons. In the righteous man there is a principle of action, which does not exist in his unconverted neighbor. Here is an important point of difference between such as are born of God, and all other men. But it should not be forgotten, that there is also a point of resemblance between them; since it is a revealed truth, that there is not a just man upon earth, who doeth good and sinneth not. Sin exists in the hearts of both saints and sinners; but *holiness* exists in the hearts of the saints alone.

2dly. The true followers of the Lamb *strive against all sin*, and seek for entire conformity to the will of God. It is their sincere prayer to God, that he would order their steps in his word, and let no iniquity have dominion over them. Ps. cxix. 133. As they watch against every sin, so they repent of every sin of which they become convinced. They are sensible of a deficiency in their obedience, but they do not allow themselves in it; for they have respect to all God’s commandments. They never feel or pretend that they are without sin; but sinless perfection, and nothing short of it, is the mark towards which they press. In this particular, their obedience differs from that of all other men. There are none others who watch against every sin, and aim at entire and constant obedience to the whole will of God; seeking to bring all their outward actions, and all the affections of their heart, into complete subjection to that will.

3rdly. The obedience of the men of grace, differs from that of all other men in this; it heartily disclaims all its own merits. We would by no means assert that they have no spiritual pride. There is no sin which troubles them more. But this is certainly true of them all, that they sincerely disclaim the merit of their best services. Many a time

they blush to lift up their faces before God, because their obedience is so very imperfect. When their holiest works are done, they cry, "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" While Nehemiah prayed that God would not wipe out those good deeds which he had done, with the next breath he prayed to be spared according to the greatness of his mercy. Neh. xiii. 14, 22. What man ever made greater attainments in holiness than Paul; yet, as to anything of the nature of merit, he renounced it all for that righteousness which is by faith. When he had no works of righteousness, except such as were wholly influenced by selfish motives, he thought he deserved heaven: but now after he had made great advances in real holiness, he felt that he deserved hell; not only because he once hated Christ and persecuted his followers, but also because his love to Him and them, was still criminally deficient.

With these three distinctive marks of the Christian's obedience in view, I shall attempt to show wherein he essentially differs from three characters which are found among men, viz: the *moralist*, the *formalist*, and the *false convert*.

(1.) The good works of the Christian differ from those of the *mere moralist*. They have a decided superiority, both in the motives from which they proceed, and the greater number of objects which they embrace. The moral man is actuated by no motives which rise above self, and he leaves out of his good works, the duties of the first table of the law. Or if, to give himself a better reputation, he should include some of these, he will leave out others which are of equal obligation. Perhaps he may refrain from the grosser profanations of the Sabbath, and may frequent the sanctuary, while he makes no conscience of worshiping God in his family, or closet. He well knows that the Redeemer has erected a standard of reconciliation in this world of rebellion, requiring all the children of Adam to repair to it; yet he feels it to be no part of his duty to espouse this holy cause, or seek its advancement. His good works do not properly regard God; nor do they extend to men, considered as the subjects of God's dominion, or as needing the grace of the gospel. But the good works of the Christian equally respect both tables of the law. He fears God and regards man. He regards the bodily wants of his fellow man; but for his soul he has a deeper concern. Nor does this concern remain concealed in his heart; it draws forth many efforts for the salvation of that soul, for which the precious blood of Christ has been shed.

The moralist, without any sanctification of heart, without including the duties of godliness among his good works, and with a very maimed obedience to the externals of the second table of the law, makes great dependence on the meritoriousness of his conduct, and flatters himself that his Judge will not inflict the penalty of the law on a man who has come so near to an entire observance of its precepts. While the believer in Christ, with a sanctified heart, and a life, not only of morality, but also of piety, feels the need of a better righteousness than his own, and would be in perfect despair, were it not for that foundation of hope which God has laid in Zion.

(2.) The obedience of the Christian differs materially from that of the *formalist*. By the formalist, is intended the man who, in his obe-



dience, includes the forms of religion, without feeling the necessity of a renovation of heart. He differs from the moralist in this; that, with the same ultimate end of action, he adds to his good works the services of *religion*. The Pharisee of the scriptures, is an exact illustration of the character in question. There is much religion, or apparent *godliness*, in the good works of a Pharisee. He has a Sabbath and a synagogue; he prays, yea, makes long prayers; and fasts as well as prays. He pays tithes to the Lord's treasury of all that he possesses; and is so zealous in propagating his religion, that he will compass sea and land to make proselytes to it. And yet we are assured by Christ himself, that except our righteousness exceed that of the Pharisees, we shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Matt. v. 20. From what was said by Christ and his apostles concerning the religion of the Pharisees, it is easy to discover the material points wherein consisted its deficiency. Their religion was all of it of an *unregenerate* character. It had no higher source than unrenewed nature, and was therefore nothing better than perfect selfishness. Luke xi. 39. John iii. 9, 10. Their religion was not only selfish, but also *self-righteous*; as it led them to depend on the meritoriousness of their own performances. All their works they did to be seen of men, or to be seen of God, from motives equally selfish: for we ought to understand that vain ambition and self-righteousness both proceed from one corrupt fountain. Matt. xxiii. 5. Luke xviii. 11, 12. Even in externals, (on which they made their whole dependence,) their religion was quite maimed. They tithed mint, anise, and cummin, but omitted the weightier matters of the law. They made long prayers, but devoured widows' houses. Matt. xxiii. 14, 23.

Between such a character, in all its various shades, and the true Christian, there is a radical difference. The Christian, as well as the Pharisee, keeps holy the Sabbath, attends on the sanctuary, prays, and sometimes adds fasting to his prayers. He, too, tithes his mint, anise, and cummin; or, in other words, he is precise in comparatively small things, which he knows ought not to be left undone; but he does not make this a pretext for omitting the weightier matters of the law. The child of God sometimes makes long prayers, especially when he gets alone in his closet; but he does not do it for a pretense, to enable him with more ease to devour widows' houses. On the contrary, his religion prompts him to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to impart to them not only instructions for their minds, but also needed refreshments for their bodies. Jam. i. 27. The zealous Christian will compass sea and land, or give his money to bear the expenses of those missionaries who are able and willing to do it, that the gospel may be preached to every creature. And this he does, not for the sake of building up a party, but to enlarge the empire of Christ, and save from sin and misery the souls of his fellow men. In observing the tradition of the elders and other uncommanded ceremonies, Pharisees, no doubt, surpass the disciples of Christ in zeal and apparent self-denial; but in keeping all the *commandments of God*, whether in relation to the duties of the first or second table of the law, Christians will be more punctiliously exact than they. And yet with all this superiority over them in external obedience, they would not

dare to hope for acceptance, unless they could discover evidence that God had taken away the stony heart out of their flesh, and given them a heart of flesh. Nor is this all the difference; for while Pharisaic formalists depend on a maimed external obedience as their justifying righteousness, Christians, in this respect, renounce their obedience, both that which is external and internal, and throw themselves as ill-deserving creatures on the mercy of God, which is manifested through the death of his Son.

(3.) The good works of the true convert, differ essentially from those of the *false convert*. Though the false convert has a shade of character different from the moralist and the formalist, yet it is not the character of him who is born from above. The moralist depends on unregenerate morality, and the Pharisee on unregenerate religion; but the false convert, discarding the schemes of both, professes to build all his hopes of heaven on the renewal of his heart, and justification through the atonement of Christ. He trusts that he has experienced this change, and that he has been accepted in the Beloved. But the fact is, that he has experienced no fundamental change; for *self* has not been dethroned. In his very reformation he brings forth fruit unto himself. He talks of Christ and free grace; but he has not been divorced from the law and united to the Savior. His inward experiences are converted into self-righteousness, as much as the morality of the moralist, or the religious services of the formalist.

Even the external obedience of the true Christian, is commonly distinguishable from that of false converts. One mark of distinction is this; it is more *universal*, extending to every duty which we owe to God and man—every duty to society at large, every relative, and every personal duty. It is more *persevering*. The love and obedience of many false converts, wax cold and come to nothing. They appear to run well for a while, and then are hindered, and stop before the race is finished. They make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. It is concerning the false convert that the inquiry is made, “Will he always call upon God?” But the obedience of the true believer will endure to the end. “The righteous shall hold on his way.” His way is the way of holiness; and he can not hold on in this way, without persevering in a life of obedience. The external obedience of such as are upright in heart, is more *uniform* than that of false converts. In the religion of the latter, there are apt to be great breaks. In some, the greater part of the intervals between seasons of special revival in the place where they live, there will be an interruption in their religion. During these intervals, nothing will appear to distinguish them from such as make no pretension to an acquaintance with Christ and his salvation. Such great interruptions, and especially when repeated, do not characterize the religion of the men of grace. They are compared to a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in season, and whose leaf does not wither—and to a tree that in the year of drought does not cease from yielding fruit. Ps. i. 3. Jer. xvii. 8.

Another thing wherein true believers visibly excel false converts, is this: their character, as it respects obedience to the laws of Christ, is continually *improving*. False converts are apt to have the most en-

gagedness in religion at the very outset ; but with true converts it is directly the reverse. The religion of the former resembles the close of the day, when the light is constantly decreasing, till it ends in the darkness of night ; but the religion of the latter is well illustrated by the dawn of the morning, when the light gains upon the darkness, till it terminates in the perfect day. Prov. iv. 18. And is it not manifest to every observer, that in the visible family of Christ, both these characters are to be found ? We are not, however, to consider all those to be true Christians, whose religion holds out to the end of their life. As the religion of the Pharisee may endure to the end, so it may be with that of some false converts. One way that the religion of true believers is to be distinguished from that of false converts, is by its *humility*. They walk humbly with God. They do not think very highly of their good works. It is graceless professors who imagine themselves to be rich and increased in goods, and in need of nothing. Revel. iii. 17. It is those who are running, and that with speed, the race set before them, who are most sensible they have not yet reached the mark. It is those who pray the most, who will be the most ashamed that they pray so little. They who feel and do most for the salvation of the souls of men, will wonder, more than others, why they feel and do so little. But when the hearts of men are under the dominion of pride, the more they do, the more highly will they be apt to think of themselves. Such will seem to say, as one of their number did, “ Come, see my zeal for the Lord.”

It is not difficult to discover the reason, why there should be a difference between the good works of the regenerated, and those of all other men. In the sight of God, who looketh not on the outward appearance, but on the heart, we can see that no works but theirs can be considered as good ; for none others are done from a good motive. Nor is it difficult to see why a true work of grace in the heart, should issue in a different course of external conduct from that which is effected by any other means. That outward obedience, whether it consist in morals or religion, which is not the effect of a real change of heart, is in a sense *mechanical*. It is made at will, with different objects in view ; and therefore among a variety of persons, this obedience and these good works may consist of different things ; since some will comprehend a greater, and some a less number of particulars in their practical system. Such a system is without any proper symmetry in its different parts. But that outward obedience which is the fruit of an inward cleansing or renovation of nature will be universal, extending to all the commands of God ; and must therefore be the same in all who experience it. When the tree is made good, the fruit must be good. When a clean heart is created and a right spirit put within us, the reformation which ensues is not mechanical, but natural. As the transparent lamps with which the streets of a city are filled, emit the light in every direction, so it is with the men into whose hearts God hath shined to give them the light of life.

Secondly. The obedience of the saints on earth, is different from that of the inhabitants of heaven.

The inhabitants of heaven are either angels who never sinned, or the spirits of just men made perfect. The religion of the saints on



earth, is perfect in its *nature*. Like the religion of heaven, it is of a disinterested character. Their love is without dissimulation, and it is operative. The glory of God is sought, and the manifestations of it are the source of enjoyment. Their religion is also perfect in its *parts*: and in these there is a manifest proportion. They love God, and they also love their fellow creatures. They worship God, and they do good to men. Their good-will and their good works extend to all men, and their fellowship extends to all beings that are possessed of a holy character, whether in heaven or earth. There is no part of the divine law to which they refuse subjection. They are also perfect, as it respects their *holding out* in obedience to the end of life. The law of their God is in their heart, and none of their steps shall slide. They go from strength to strength, and will every one of them appear before God in the Zion above. For such reasons as these, even the saints on earth are denominated perfect men. *Perfect* is used synonymously with *upright* in this passage: "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." Ps. xxxvii. 37.

But the perfection of the best man on earth, differs widely from the perfection of heaven. His perfection is deficient in degree, being counteracted by indwelling sin. He is holy, and yet he is sinful; he is spiritual, and yet he confesses, "I am carnal, sold under sin." The spirit lusteth against the flesh, and the flesh also lusteth against the spirit. Sometimes he runs in the way of God's commandments, and at other times he backslides. His obedience is not undeviating; and at his best state he is ashamed of his sinful imperfection. This mixed character, made up of the moral opposites, holiness and sin, is peculiar to the saints on earth. There are no other creatures in the universe who are in this situation. In hell, and among the unregenerate on earth, depravity is entire; and in heaven, among the angels of God and the spirits of just men, holiness is entire. The character of the saints on earth does, therefore, as really differ from that of the inhabitants of heaven, as from that of wicked men and devils.

But even while on earth, the external conduct of the regenerate is so regulated by the precepts of the Bible, as commonly to present a kind of uniform obedience; so that it may be proper to say of them, and of some of their number in a more emphatic sense, They are blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom they shine as lights in the world. Phil. ii. 15. Their external deportment has sometimes been such, that their watchful foes could find no evil thing to say of them. Dan. vi. 4. But if they should all be enabled to live as irreproachable lives as Daniel, they would discover faults in themselves, and would make daily confession, not only of the sin of their fellow men, but also of their own. Dan. ix. 20. The distance between the saints on earth and the saints in glory, as it respects perfection of character, is still great; but, praised be God, the distance is constantly diminishing.

It has been shown that the obedience of the saints on earth is humble, and not self-righteous. In this it differs from the obedience of all their fellow men; yet it must be acknowledged that, through remain-

ing depravity, there is much of a spirit of pride and self-righteousness mingled with their good works. But in heaven there is nothing of this; not even among those who once inhabited the earth. On leaving the earth, they cast away the garment of self-righteousness, nor will they ever clothe themselves with it again. Though now their obedience will rise to perfection, it will produce no feeling of self-sufficiency. Their deliverance from sin and ruin, and their establishment in holiness and blessedness, they will ascribe to the blood of the Lamb. When they stand on the mount Zion above, their feet will still remain on that foundation of the sinner's hope, which was laid in the Zion below. The angels are under a different covenant, and therefore do not rest on the same foundation; and yet are at the greatest remove from Pharisaic self-righteousness. Though justified by the works of the law, they do not glory before God, since they feel that, in rendering perfect obedience to the divine law, they have done only what was their *duty* to do. Rom. iv. 2. Luke xvii. 10. Nor is this all—they also feel that they are laid under everlasting obligation to give thanks to their Creator, for imparting to them and preserving in them, a holy character, and thus qualifying them to enjoy those manifestations of his glory which will be made through the ages of eternity.

IV. At the close of this Division of our work, it may be useful to present a brief sketch of *the life of Christ*, as illustrating, to perfection, that holy practice which the scriptures enjoin upon us.

The life of Christ was intended as an example for his people; who are therefore called the *followers* of the Lamb. In regard to the spirit with which he endured his sufferings, he is said to have left us an example, that we should follow in his steps. 1 Pet. ii. 21. When he humbled himself to wash the feet of his disciples, he says to them, "I have given you an example;" that is, an example of humility, and a readiness to perform every kind office which benevolence should dictate. There are other examples of holy living given us in the scriptures; but there is none except that of our Savior, which is perfect. We are required to take the prophets for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Jam. v. 12. Paul proposes himself as an example, but with this restriction, that they should follow him as far as he did Christ. 1 Cor. xi. 1. All other examples must be brought to this as the standard, the only infallible standard. They who do not copy after Christ as their example, are not *Christians*. "If any man," said Christ, "will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and *follow me*." Matt. xvi. 24. "His sheep follow him." John x. 4. "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself so to walk, even as he walked." 1 John, ii. 6. None of the followers of Christ have come up to their Master; but they all agree in fixing their eye on him as their pattern. Nor will they ever rest contented, until their imitation of him shall become perfect.

Some may think it presumptive, and almost blasphemous, to attempt a perfect imitation of our Redeemer, who is God supreme. It would indeed be arrogant, for us worms of the dust to think of imitating God in the *infinitude* of his attributes; and yet in the goodness of our character, as to the nature and completeness of it, we are commanded to

be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect, and to be followers of God as dear children. But let us not forget, that the Savior is as truly possessed of the human nature as of the divine. As a man, when he lived among men, he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. It is the perfect life of the *man* Christ Jesus, which is particularly placed before us in the gospel for our imitation.

The obedience of Christ was perfect, both within and without.—Holy affections constituted the fountain from which all his external obedience flowed. He could say to his Father, without making the least exception, “*I delight to do thy will, O my God ; yea, thy law is within my heart.*” Ps. xl. 8. His practical religion was first experienced. He possessed all those experiences which have been shown to constitute the internal religion of his followers, so far as they could be possessed by one who never needs repentance. The love of *good-will* was manifested to perfection in the life of Christ. Nor was his *complacency* in the character of holy beings, any less apparent. *Submission*, as far as it consists in the reconciliation of a rebel to the divine government, he could not exercise ; for he was never unreconciled to it : but as far as it consists in a consent to the will of God, and a choice that his will should be done, it was perfect. He had no sin of which to *repent*, but he was grieved at the sin of others wherever he saw it. Neither did he, like his brethren the children of Adam, need *faith* in the righteousness of another ; but as a man, he was full of that faith which implies confidence in God—confidence in the perfection of his providence and moral government. He was the subject of *hope* ; for he says, “*My flesh shall rest in hope.*” Ps. xvi. 9. Of *humility* he was an illustrious example—“*meek and lowly in heart.*” So far as *hungering and thirsting after righteousness* is understood to imply any sinful destitution of the thing desired, he was incapable of that hunger and thirst which his followers experience ; but his appetite for holiness was stronger than theirs ; for it was perfect : nor was it ever so satiated as to be thereby diminished. There is no need of saying anything concerning his possessing the spirit of *forgiveness*, or of *self-denial*. Nor is it less evident, that *thankfulness* to God and *holy meditation*, constituted a part of the experimental religion of Him, who is not only the Savior, but the pattern of his people.

These holy affections and heavenly tempers which were in Christ, we are made acquainted with, not so much by his telling us that he possessed them, as by his *acting them out*, and appearing to be under their influence in all that he said, and did, and suffered. He evinced the benevolence of his heart, by his benevolent actions : “*He went about doing good.*” His complacency in holiness was shown by the manner in which he treated beings possessed of a holy character ; namely, God, angels, and saints. Communion with these, appeared to be his happiness. His submission was made known by the manner in which he bore his sufferings. He manifested his trust in God and hope for the good which was promised him, by correspondent actions ; his humility, by a humble carriage ; and his spirit of forgiveness, by praying for his enemies and doing them good. He gave evidence that he was possessed of a self-denying spirit, by actions which were most unequivocally of a self-denying character. The thankfulness of his heart was evinced, by his explicitly giving thanks to God in pray-



er, and by making it the whole business of his life to please and glorify him. That his meditations were holy—that his heart was always inditing a good matter, was made manifest by the spirituality of all his discourse.

Now as it was with the Master, so it must be with his disciples ; they must prove the goodness of their hearts, by the goodness of their lives. We are to consider holy *actions* as the main proof of holy *affections*. A tree is proved to be good, by its good fruit ; the soil to be rich, by a rich harvest ; a fountain to be copious and sweet, by the refreshing streams which issue from it. Matt. vii. 16—20 ; xiii. 8. John vii. 38.

Jesus Christ was a perfect example in the different departments of holy practice, so far as the relations which he sustained, gave opportunity for such practice to be exemplified. As has been shown, holy practice naturally divides itself into two parts ; the first comprising our duties to God, and the second our duties to men. Both these were taught, and both were exemplified, by our blessed Lord. His example was perfect in those duties which are more immediately due to God. Five branches of godliness were particularly specified, namely, the worship of God—seeking an acquaintance with his word—the sanctification of his day—a union with his visible church—and the consecration of a portion of our earthly substance to his treasury. In all these, the Savior was an example to us. He was a worshiper of God ; a man eminent for prayer. He manifested a great acquaintance with the scriptures, and an entire regard for them. Nor was he a profaner of the holy Sabbath. Nothing is more unjust than to represent him as lax in its observance. We are informed that it was his custom to go into the synagogue on the Sabbath day ; and not a single breach of the law of the Sabbath, can be pointed out in his whole life. He evinced great respect for the visible church, and lived in fellowship with it ; walking in all the commandments and ordinances which were then obligatory on the people of God. As to the consecration of property to the Lord's treasury, it must be remembered, that though he was rich, he became poor, and lived all his days in a state of pecuniary dependence : but it is manifest that he approved of this branch of duty as much as of any other. Witness his approbation of the offering of the poor widow. He himself gave as liberally as was consistent with his means. He paid tribute to the temple ; and it may be fairly inferred, from the interpretation which some of his disciples put upon his language to Judas, when he said, "That thou doest, do quickly ;" that he was in the habit of ordering something from his scanty store, to be given to the poor. See John xiii. 27.

The example of our Redeemer is equally worthy of imitation, in the duties of the second table of the law. These were considered under three heads, *general*, *relative*, and *personal* duties. The duties of the first of these three classes, were not neglected by him. He extended his good will and good works to the *whole race of man* ; and to all their lawful interests. He manifested a concern for men's lives. He declared that he did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. By his miracles he saved the lives of many, relieving them of their diseases, and restoring their health. He manifested a suitable regard

to the property and reputation of mankind ; but a concern for their souls occupied his chief attention. It was this which led him to weep over them ; to be so unwearied in giving them instruction, and to pour out his blood for their redemption.

In the duties of *relative* life, Christ is a pattern for our imitation. In the domestic circle, he sustained the relation of a son : as such he was in childhood subject to his parents ; and when he was leaving the world, he did not forget to make provision for the support and comfort of his mother, who, as he knew, would survive him. See Luke ii. 51. John xix. 25—27. Christ and his twelve disciples did, in a sense, constitute one domestic circle, of which he was the head. To them he acted the part of a father. He provided for their wants, gave them instruction as they were able to receive it, and prayed with them and for them. He indulged them with freedom of access at all times. Their faults he reproved ; but he did it in love, to make them better men ; more useful on earth, and more meet for the kingdom of heaven. Having once adopted them into his family, he never abandoned them, but loved them unto the end.

As to the *personal* duties of our Savior, they can all be summed up in a word—*He kept himself unspotted from the world.* He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. He sought his own personal good, considered as one of the children of men, just so far as was consistent with seeking the glory of God and the salvation of his guilty brethren.

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## CONCLUDING REMARKS

I. *The glory of divine truth is not fully discovered, until it is seen that there is an entire harmony between its various parts.*

We do not fully see the glory of the *doctrines* of the Bible, until we perceive their mutual agreement. Thus, we do not see how desirable it is that God should make his own glory the ultimate end of all his works, until it has been shown that he is infinitely great and good, and therefore most worthy to be the Omega, as he is the Alpha ; the ending, as he is the beginning of all things. The doctrine of a divine purpose concerning every creature and event, is seen to be consistent and glorious, only in connection with the unlimited wisdom and benevolence of the divine mind : and the doctrine of a divine agency, employed in giving existence to every creature and event, appears desirable, when viewed in connection with the wisdom of the plan which is in this way executed ; and consistent, when viewed in connection with that doctrine which teaches that intelligent creatures, though dependent, are still free, and are lovely or unlovely, well or ill deserving, according to the nature of their own voluntary exercises.

The moral law appears glorious in itself ; but its lustre is increased,

when it is viewed in connection with the amiableness and blessedness of those creatures that obey its precepts, and the hatefulness and wretchedness of those who have transgressed. It is now made evident by facts, that keeping the law makes intelligent beings amiable, useful, and happy ; and that transgressing it renders them hateful, mischievous, and wretched. An atonement made by an infinitely dignified Personage, appears glorious, after we have been shown the perfection of the law, and the evil nature and ruinous tendency of sin. The universal offer of salvation is seen to be consistent, when placed by the side of an unlimited atonement, a propitiation for the sins of the whole world ; and the universal rejection of this gracious offer by all the unregenerate, is in perfect agreement with the doctrine of total depravity. And if we keep this last doctrine out of sight, the glory of regeneration, or even the necessity of it, can not be seen. It is in view of universal, entire, and obstinate depravity, that regeneration is discovered to be an act of sovereign grace, according to the good pleasure which God purposed in himself. The doctrine of a free justification must be viewed in close connection, both with the law and the atonement, and then its consistency and preciousness will be seen. It is in connection with these other exhibitions of free grace, that the everlasting covenant which keeps the saints from falling, is seen to be beautiful and glorious. To see the glory of divine justice, in separating the wicked to the left hand in the day of judgment, and in separating them to all evil forever, we must keep in mind what a God they have rebelled against, what a law they have transgressed, what a Savior they have slighted, and what a rebellious character they now possess ; also, the lasting influence which their punishment will exert in supporting divine government. And the glory of that mercy which is shown to the righteous, can not be seen, without bringing into view their union to the Redeemer, and their meetness for heaven.

The glory of *experimental* religion can not be fully discerned, unless we see the harmony of its different parts : for example, the harmony there is between extending our benevolence to all intelligent, and even all sentient beings, and confining our complacency to beings of a holy character ; the harmony there is between love to God and our neighbor, as growing from the same root, which must always produce both these branches, in case it produces either of them ; the harmony between an unfeigned reconciliation to God, and an unfeigned sorrow for past enmity ; also between such sorrow for sin, and a cordial approbation of the atonement, which was designed to magnify the law and condemn the breach of it. “The King’s daughter is all glorious within.” Beside the graces already mentioned, there is hope, humility, thirsting after righteousness, a spirit of forgiveness, self-denial, thankfulness, and other similar affections ; which, when all taken together, constitute a pure heart—an object of delight to the Holy One of Israel.

The moral beauty of *Christian practice* is not seen, unless the harmonious connection of its parts is likewise seen. A life of devotion towards God does not appear beautiful, but deformed, when disconnected from a life of uprightness towards men. An *immoral saint*—is a sound which grates on the ear. And why should *prayerless* moral-



ity be viewed as any more consistent than *immoral* devotion? Why would not a system of ethics be equally defective, that should leave out the duties we owe to God, as one which should leave out those we owe to our fellow men? A life of godliness needs all its parts; such as a devout attention to the worship, word, and day of God; together with the consecration of ourselves to his service, to walk in fellowship with his people; and a consecration of the first fruits of our increase to the advancement of his kingdom on the earth. Morality is not seen to advantage, without taking a view of the various duties which it embraces; duties which we owe to our fellow men in general, duties we owe to those with whom we have particular connection in life, and duties which we owe to ourselves. Were we to describe a man as eminent in his attention to some articles of Christian practice, but regardless of others equally plain and important, all would say, the want of symmetry spoils the character.

The glory of Christian doctrines appears, not only in their being harmonious among themselves, but also in their tendency to produce holy affections; so that between doctrinal and experimental religion there exists a beautiful harmony. As we discover a new glory in the doctrines, when we see their tendency to produce those inward affections which constitute the experimental part of religion, so these inward affections are seen to derive their excellency from their agreement with the doctrines. This agreement with doctrinal truth, is that which makes them essentially to differ from all the foolish reveries of fanatics.

Again, as the glory of truth in doctrine, is discovered in its tendency to produce truth in feeling; so the glory of the latter is seen in its tendency to produce truth in action: and there is in reality no glory to be seen in practical religion, only when it is considered as the fruit of that which is experimental. The good works which are commended in the scriptures, are always to be understood as proceeding from a good heart. The scriptures uniformly teach us, that a sanctified heart will be manifested by good works; and that no works, however specious, which do not proceed from such a fountain, deserve to be termed good. It is one of the sayings of the Savior, "*A good tree can not bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*" Such a tree may bring forth fruit which has a fair appearance, but as it is rotten at the core, it is not with propriety denominated good.

II. *The harmony of the religion which is inculcated in the scriptures, furnishes one striking proof of their divine inspiration.*

The scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were written by more than thirty different penmen, who were dispersed throughout a period of more than fifteen hundred years. The writers appear to have been men of different talents, education, and employments. In their writings there is a variety, both as to style and matter. As to matter, some parts contain the history of past events, and others, predictions of events which were yet to happen: some contain precepts and prohibitions; others, promises and threatenings: some make a statement of doctrines; others disclose the feelings of the

heart ; while it is the object of other parts to mark out to us a proper line of external conduct. Here also is delineated the character of a multitude of moral agents, embracing such as are represented to be lovely, and such as are represented to be hateful. Here is much said concerning God, the supreme Agent, and concerning angels and men, both good and bad.

Now among all this multitude of writers who were employed, and variety of subjects treated on, there is exhibited *one*, and only one system of religion. My design has not led me to speak of the agreement between the different historical narrations ; nor between these narrations and the predictions relating to them. This department I have left to other hands ; while it has been my object to show, that in all these writings there is exhibited one harmonious system of religion. These compositions, produced by so many different writers, do not contradict each other in the representations they make concerning truth, whether relating to *doctrine*, *experience*, or *practice*. As to *doctrines*, there is a perfect agreement. They speak the same things concerning God—his natural and moral attributes—his designs and agency in creation, and the extensiveness and perfection of his moral government over his intelligent creatures—concerning the apostacy and entire depravity of man—an atonement for sin, as providing the only consistent means for extending forgiveness to lost men—the free offer of forgiveness and eternal salvation to such as accept of the atonement—our wicked inability or indisposition to accept this free offer, until renewed by the Holy Ghost—the grace which is displayed in this renovation—its accordance with the divine purpose—justification by faith—perseverance in faith and obedience unto the end—the general judgment, together with the eternity of future rewards and punishments—and God's purpose and agency in all his works of creation and providence.

Concerning these pillar doctrines, and all others which go to make up the creed of the scriptures, there is no difference of opinion. That there is such a thing as *truth* in doctrine, is every where implied in the sacred volume ; and the important question, *What is truth ?* is fully answered. All the writers give the same answer. They do not all treat on each doctrine ; nor do they all shed equal light on the doctrines of which they do treat. But there is none of that discord among them in this respect, which often appears among others who write on these subjects ; and sometimes even when the writers are of the same religious denomination. There are none of the sacred writers who oppose the unity of God ; or the trinity of persons in the Godhead. None of them deny the doctrine of a divine purpose concerning future events ; nor do they ever make use of the doctrine to destroy the accountability or criminality of men ; though they intimate that it would be thus abused. Rom. ix. 19, 20. Jer. vii. 8—10. In no part of these writings is the apostacy of the first man denied, nor the consequent universal and entire depravity of his race. Nor is the necessity of an atonement any where questioned : nor a word said against either the divinity or humanity of Him, by whom this atonement was made. There is nothing in the scriptures to oppose the sentiment, That every sinner may be saved who is willing to accept

of salvation as it is freely offered in the gospel. Nor can anything be found in opposition to that sentiment, which supposes the unreasonable rebellion of every heart to be such, as to render it certain that no man will possess this willingness, except as the effect of the all-conquering power of divine grace. And is there one of the sacred writers who seems reluctant to ascribe to God the prerogative to extend or withhold this subduing power, according to his own pleasure? Has one of them taken up his pen to expose and put down the doctrine of personal, unconditional election? It can not be said that the doctrine was not then in existence; for in some parts of the scriptures it is treated of with as much explicitness, as in any of the theological systems of the present day. Among the sacred writers there are not found any discordant sentiments on the subject of justification. They exhibit two modes of justification, the one by the deeds of the law, and the other by the faith of Jesus Christ; but they all agree in this, that the latter is the only mode of justification which is at all adapted to the state of the sinful children of men.\* The sacred writers are no less unanimous, in the testimony they give in support of that gracious covenant, which secures perseverance in holiness to all such as have once passed from death unto life. Nor is there one of them that has written a single sentence against the doctrine of the resurrection of the body—the general judgment, and a separation, complete and final, then to be made between holy and unholy creatures.

Their agreement is no less apparent on the subject of *experimental* religion. Certainly there is not one of them who has attempted to ridicule religious experience, as though it were whimsical or unnecessary. They say nothing which intimates that an orthodox belief is sufficient; or that this, together with a round of religious performances, will constitute a holy character, such as will meet the approbation of the supreme Judge. Some parts of the Bible are peculiarly experimental. This is the case with the Psalms of David, the discourses of Christ, and some parts of the apostolic epistles. But the religion of the heart is every where kept in view, and is always spoken of as so absolutely essential, that without it, orthodoxy is nothing better than the faith of devils, and external reformation nothing better than the outside cleansing of the cup and platter, or the whitening of sepulchres which are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

These writings agree, not only in establishing the necessity of ex-

\* There is perhaps no doctrine in the Bible, concerning which there is more of an apparent difference, than that of justification. Paul asserts that "a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law;" and James says, "Ye see how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." See Rom. iii. 28. Jam. ii. 24. It needs, however, but a small degree of attention, accompanied with a little candor, to reconcile the two apostles. When Paul asserts that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law, he clearly does not mean to say, that he is justified by a dead, inactive faith, which is not followed with good works, even such works as the law enjoins; but he means to tell us, that the justified man does by faith go out of all dependence on the merit of his performances, and that he rests all his hope of acceptance on the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. And when James asserts that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only, he does not mean to speak a word against the faith which Paul inculcates; nor against the entireness of our dependence on the Redeemer's righteousness as the meritorious ground of justification. It is manifestly his intention to point his artillery against a faith, which many have always confided in, which is unaccompanied with good works, and is nothing superior to the faith of devils.



perimental religion, but also in their descriptions of the nature of that experience which they enforce. Our affections must all, of necessity, be of a selfish, or disinterested character. This distinction is every where observed in the scriptures; and selfish affections, however modified, are never represented as constituting the religion which will meet the divine approbation. The benevolence which is here approved, extends to all conditions and characters, not excepting our enemies. The scribes and Pharisees taught, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy:" but the scriptures speak a language altogether different from this. They teach us to extend our love of good-will to all, irrespective of character; and our love of complacency to all whose character is holy. Submission to God is a branch of inward religion, which the scriptures all unite in approving: nor is there any place where we are cautioned against being too unreserved in our submission. All parts of the Bible evidently make repentance and faith essential to the religion of the heart; and they all give us the same views of these essential requisites to salvation. The same may be said of the Christian hope. The humility and meekness inculcated by Moses and the prophets, by Christ and the apostles, are of the same nature; and they all affirm that, without them, there is no religion which is acceptable to God. They also teach that thirsting desires after holiness and a forgiving and self-denying spirit, are indispensable; nor is there a single passage in all the canonical books, which makes a different representation. And who will pretend that they contain anything in opposition to that thankfulness to God, and meditation in his law, which (under Part II.) were shown to have a place in the experience of every good man?

The penmen of the scriptures all write in favor of external obedience to the commands of God. There is not one among them that takes the ground of modern antinomians, in speaking lightly of practical religion: nor do they appear to disagree concerning the particular duties which are comprehended in holy practice. They all represent the duties of *godliness*, (which belong to the first table of the law,) as essential to good works; not one of them intimating that morality is sufficient to constitute a good man, in the neglect of the worship of God; or that a life of prayer to God, will constitute him a saint, who entirely neglects the duties of the second table. There is not one of these writers who stands up to oppose the rest, for requiring too many duties either to God or man—too many general or relative duties; nor for requiring us to have too strict a watch over our own persons.

How can it be accounted for, that the writers of the scriptures should be so entirely agreed in their representations concerning the various parts of religion; and that the religion they exhibit should be in such perfect harmony with itself? Will any say, This religion is a cunningly devised fable, and is therefore so contrived as to have its parts agree? To this we may reply, It is not an easy thing for one false witness to agree with himself, especially when his testimony shall be drawn out to any considerable length; and certainly it is much more difficult for many false witnesses to agree with each other. There were many who bore false witness against Christ; but their witness agreed not together. But in these sacred writings, we are pre-

sented with quite a number of witnesses, and the testimony of some of them comprises many long chapters ; and yet each witness is not only consistent with himself, but also with all the rest ; so that among this great company of witnesses, there is no discordant testimony.

Now could it be possible that so great a number of writers, thrown apart by such a protracted period of time, should be able, by their own skill, to produce a book containing one harmonious system of religion—a system comprising many articles in relation to doctrine, and experience, and practice ? The only consistent way to account for this harmony among the writers of the scriptures, is that by which the scriptures themselves account for it, namely, by supposing them all to be guided by one Spirit. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” “The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” It is not sufficient to account for their harmony, merely by supposing the writers to be good men. Nothing short of a supernatural guidance by the Spirit of truth, could have insured such an entire agreement.

When in addition to the harmony of the scriptures, we take into view that purity which characterizes them, the evidence of their inspiration is made exceedingly clear. Let them be ever so harmonious, they could not be from God, if they were not also pure. God is holy, and a revelation from him must be of a holy character. “Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil ; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness ; and put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.” Isa. v. 20. In the natural world, the difference between darkness and light, bitter and sweet, is very palpable. And in the moral world, there is a difference no less manifest between evil and good—sin and holiness. To do anything to confound this essential difference between moral opposites, exposes us to the vengeance of the Almighty. Surely, the Christian scriptures are not chargeable with this fault. Every thing they say, is well adapted to make the distinction between good and evil very manifest. The character which they ascribe to Jehovah, is infinitely perfect. They do not, for the purpose of accounting for the evil which appears, adopt a system which supposes two supreme beings ; but, what is altogether more consistent, they represent one infinitely good being as presiding over the universe, having power to control evil as well as good agents, and to give such a direction to the whole system of events, as to further all the designs of his benevolence.

What a perfect distinction between moral good and evil, is made in that code of laws, which the scriptures present to us as the enactments of the supreme Lawgiver. And the same character which he exhibits in these enactments, they represent him to have uniformly manifested in his actual treatment of his loyal and rebellious subjects. The immutable distinction between moral good and evil, does not forbid the exercise of compassion towards evil-doers. But to prevent all suspicion that this unalterable difference is confounded, divine compassion, according to the scriptures, is displayed through the medium of an atonement ; and one of such a character as to make the announcement perfectly distinct, that though sinners are in this way received to favor, their sin is viewed as infinitely hateful, and as deserving punish-

ment instead of reward. Another thing which shows that the scriptures treat of moral subjects, in such a way as not to confound good and evil; they give no encouragement of pardon to any but such as return from their rebellion and regain a spirit of loyalty. And the representations, which they make, concerning the exact discrimination to be made between good and bad characters at the last day, and by the retributions of eternity, prove that they are far, very far, from confounding things which differ.

All which the scriptures say concerning the religion of the heart, its disinterested nature, and its absolute necessity to render us in the least degree acceptable to God, proves that the distinction they make between holiness and sin, is real and fundamental. And all they teach concerning the necessity of holiness in practice—the necessity of piety towards God—of uprightness towards men—and of the exercise of a proper government over ourselves,—serves to show that the holiness of character which they enjoin, is no visionary or superficial thing; that it differs from sin as much as light differs from darkness.

III. *If we lose sight of the harmony subsisting between the parts of divine truth, the different promises and threatenings of the scriptures may seem to be at variance.*

The religion of the holy scriptures is one connected and harmonious system of truth. Were it otherwise, it might be difficult to see how God could promise forgiveness to all such as repent of their sins; and yet threaten damnation to all such as do not believe on his Son Jesus Christ. This would create an insuperable difficulty, were it possible that one should possess a *penitential*, and yet not a *believing* character. But as soon as we understand that repentance and faith have a common nature, both proceeding from one root, being different parts of the same inward knowledge of God and divine truth, the difficulty vanishes: for now we see that every heart which is prepared to hate sin, must also be prepared to love Christ and trust in him for salvation.

God smiles with approbation on all such as delight in his saints; and yet he threatens such as do not love and forgive their enemies, that they shall never obtain the forgiveness of their own sins. Why then may not one claim a promise of salvation for loving the saints, and be at the same time under a threatening of damnation for not loving his enemies? This can not be, because there is an infallible connection between exercising the love of delight towards saints, and the love of good-will towards sinners. No one can have a heart to delight in the saints on account of their holiness of character, and at the same time indulge malicious feelings towards the wicked, although they may happen to be his personal enemies.

Heaven is promised to all who are born of the Spirit—to all who have new hearts. Neither can the promise fail: and yet the single circumstance of *not believing the truth*, is represented to be of sufficient consequence to expose us to the damnation of hell. See 2 Thess. ii. 12. But you will say, Can they who are born of God and sanctified by his Spirit be lost, merely because they do not believe the truth? I answer, They who are truly born of God can not be lost; and yet they must believe the truth in order to salvation. But such is the agree-



ment between truth in doctrine, and truth in experience, that he who in regeneration has received the *love* of the truth, will receive the *truth* which he loves. He who is chosen to salvation, is chosen through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. 2 Thess. ii. 13.

The promise of God's eternal favor is very often made to holy affections of heart; as in these beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven—Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled—Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." And yet the threatenings of the Bible are pointed against such as do not yield an external obedience to the divine commands. At the last day Christ will disown all such as, on earth, were *workers* of iniquity. To the saints at Ephesus, the apostle thus writes: "Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things," (i. e. the wicked practices which he had just mentioned,) "cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." Eph. v. 6. The truth is, such is the agreement between experimental and practical religion, that they who are poor in spirit—who hunger and thirst after righteousness—and who are pure in heart—will have their external behavior correspond with those holy affections, and consequently will not be workers of iniquity.

God has made promises of everlasting blessedness to those who perform good works; such as calling on his name in prayer, keeping his Sabbaths from polluting them, giving alms to the poor, speaking truth to their neighbors, uprightness in their dealings, and the like. But we ought not to forget, that the good works to which he makes these promises, are such as flow from holy affections in the heart. As the inward affections to which he makes the promise of his eternal favor, are such as will discover themselves in those external actions which are commanded; so the external actions which he promises to reward, are such as flow from holy affections. The holy affections insure the reward, because they also insure holy actions; and the actions insure the reward, because they are not dead works, but the result of a holy principle in the heart.

Were this harmony, which subsists between the different parts of the religion of the Bible, well understood, we should not so often hear one part commended and exalted, to the disadvantage of another. In the days of my youth, I heard a doctor of divinity preach on this text: "He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely." Prov. x. 9. I well remember that, without telling us what was implied in walking uprightly, he immediately began to praise his text, as though it contained in it all the information on the subject of religion which his hearers could need. He said there was much dispute in the world concerning what was necessary to salvation: but he observed, that this text rendered all these disputes unnecessary, by telling us that the man who walked uprightly, walked surely. He proceeded to specify a number of those things, which have commonly been considered among Christians as absolute requisites for future blessedness. Among these, I distinctly recollect he mentioned *faith*; after which he again introduced his text, prefaced with a disjunctive: *But*, "he that walketh uprightly, walketh surely."

Now if a right view of the harmonious nature of divine truth, has been given in the preceding work, *upright walking*, on which so much reliance was made by this learned preacher, could not exist, when disconnected from that faith which he represented as so immaterial a part of religion, that it might be dispensed with and not endanger our salvation. Let me here refer the reader to a passage in the prophet Habakkuk : “ Behold, his soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him : but the just shall live by his faith.” Hab. ii. 4. Here we learn that there is no real *uprightness* in the proud man whose soul is lifted, or puffed up. This is one of the distinctive characteristics of the just man, who lives by his faith. The uprightness, which was so much commended by that master in Israel to whom I have referred, was no more the uprightness to which the scriptures make the promise of salvation, than a mere speculative belief, of which devils are the subjects, is that faith which has the promise of eternal life. It is true, God has promised salvation to the upright : but he acknowledges none as entitled to this character, who have not the principle of faith within ; and who, in their external obedience, do not add godliness to their uprightness. He has also promised salvation to such as pray ; but he will acknowledge none as truly prayerful, who do not add uprightness to prayer.

If the different parts of the religion of the scriptures, be not contemplated as one harmonious system, we shall be in danger of arraying them against each other : and at one time of making use of one part, and then again of another part, to oppose and destroy the rest. In this way, one preacher may take the *morality* of the Bible, to subvert the *godliness* which it enjoins ; while another may reverse the plan, by making the duties of godliness supersede the necessity of good morals. To prevent all this mischief, nothing more is needed, than to discover the harmony between the various parts of the system, and to give to each its appropriate place.

IV. *The reality, importance, and harmony of divine truth, serve to discover the criminality and dangerous tendency of heresy.*

*Heresy* is fundamental error in religious sentiments. Not that every sentiment which has, at some periods of the church, been so termed, is fundamentally wrong, or even wrong at all. Many a friend of truth has been ready to make the same confession which Paul made to the Roman governor, when he said ; “ I confess unto thee, that after the way which *they* call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers.” But what the *scriptures* call heresy, is false, criminal, and dangerous. Let us first hear the testimony of the apostle Peter on this subject : “ But there were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.” 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2. In this inspired testimony concerning heresies, we learn such things as these : that they consist in a *denial* of fundamental doctrines ; such, for example, as atonement for sin—“ *even denying the Lord that bought them ;*” that their tendency is to discredit the truth and bring it into

contempt—"by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of;" that it may be expected they will be introduced in such a covert manner as hardly to excite suspicion—"who privily shall bring in damnable heresies;" that it will usually be done by men who sustain the office of *teachers* in the church; and that their heresies will often be far from rendering them unpopular—"many shall follow their pernicious ways." In this testimony we also learn, that heresies are neither *innocent* nor *harmless*. They are here called *damnable*, and are said to bring destruction in their train; ruining both the master and the scholar.

Let us now hear the testimony of the apostle Paul on this subject. In his epistle to the Galatians, he puts heresies among the works of the flesh, as evidencing an unrenewed mind. In his first epistle to the Corinthians, he speaks of the necessity of the existence of heresies in the church, as the means of making a fuller discovery of the sincerity of the approved followers of Christ. By this he more than intimates, that such will not become heretics. See 1 Cor. xi. 19. In writing to Titus, he gives this direction for the discipline of the churches: "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such, is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself." Here we are taught that a heretic, in the very thing which gives him the name, sins; and that he condemns *himself*, not needing any witness to testify against him, because he avows, and often glories in, the corrupt sentiment with which he stands charged. We are also taught, that heresy furnishes as good a reason for excluding a member from the Christian church, as immoral conduct does.

But why is heresy made so criminal a thing? How can one be worthy of blame merely for his sentiments, even if they do not happen to be right? I flatter myself that the view of the subject of religion, which we have taken in this work, will prepare us to answer this question. We have seen, that the scriptures claim this peculiar honor for the religion they reveal, that it is *the truth*; that its doctrines are not arbitrary opinions, but founded on facts; so that they can not be different from what they are, any more than God can possess a different character, or his relation to the created universe be altered. We have seen that it is the truth of the doctrines, which gives them their *harmony*; and that it is the true doctrines, and these alone, which are considered as having the least tendency to purify the heart and produce a life of obedience. But heresies are false doctrines, and therefore not calculated to purify men's souls. On the contrary, they defile the mind, and eat like a canker. It does not make them any more innocent or harmless, because they are believed by their advocates, and propagated for true doctrines. It is said concerning seducers, that they should *deceive and be deceived*. 2 Tim. iii. 13.

When the religion of the gospel is considered as a glorious, consistent, and harmonious exhibition of the truth of God, heresy, which is a denial of one or more of its fundamental doctrines, can not appear a small evil. It is the axe of destruction, laid at the root of this wide-branching and fruitful tree. In view of the natural tendency of error to dishonor God, and ruin the souls of men, we can see why the Spirit of truth moved the sacred writers to speak with such vehemency against those who denied a single doctrine which was essential to the



gospel scheme. With what zeal did Paul oppose the false teachers in the churches of Galatia, for corrupting the doctrine of *justification*. Nor did he manifest the least tolerance of the heresy propagated by Hymeneus and Philetus, who said the resurrection was already past, and whose heresy had overthrown the faith of some professed Christians. What pains did the apostle John take, in his gospel and in two of his epistles, to expose the sentiments of those who denied either the divinity or humanity of his Lord and Savior. The zeal which these apostles displayed in opposing an erroneous sentiment, not only manifested their abhorrence of that particular error, but also their tender concern for the whole system of truth, which was thereby endangered. Such is the harmonious connection of the truth, that any corrupt doctrine, which pulls away a single pillar, tends to pull down the whole fabric. Let a man imbibe erroneous sentiments concerning the moral attributes of God, and he will naturally be led to form wrong views of his law; and this will lead him to wrong views concerning the depravity and ill-desert of men; and this, in its turn, will lead to wrong views concerning atonement for sin, regeneration, and other gospel doctrines.

What has now been suggested is not a mere *may be*; instances have actually occurred, where a single heretical doctrine, like the illegitimate son of Gideon, has slain all the system of true doctrines. The case of Dr. Priestly is a striking illustration of this. He says concerning himself, "that he was once a Calvinist, and that of the strictest sect; then a high Arian; next a low Arian; then a Socinian, and, in a little time, a Socinian of the lowest kind; in which Jesus Christ is considered as a mere man, the son of Joseph and Mary, and naturally as fallible and peccable as Moses or any of the prophets." He also says, "He does not know when his creed will be fixed."<sup>\*</sup>

If one fundamental error be embraced and made the criterion of sentiment, it eats like a canker, and will at length destroy every important article of an orthodox faith. On the other hand, let one fundamental truth be adopted, and be used as a kind of standard by which every sentiment shall be tried, and it will be found sufficient to bring us into a belief of the whole system. There is such an agreement between all the true doctrines, that if we do but get and keep a firm hold of one, it will bring the others along with it; as one link will draw the whole series of links in a chain. This remark is illustrated by an eminent example, which may serve as a contrast to the one which was just now placed before the reader. The case to which I now allude, is that of Dr. Scott. It is well known to the Christian public, that when this eminent man first entered the ministry, he did not, in a proper sense, believe any of those Articles which have been exhibited in this work, as being the only harmonious system of Christian doctrine. It is also known that, eventually, he did, in substance, adopt this whole system. But the system was not all adopted at once. According to his own statements, (contained in the Force of Truth,) he first obtained correct views of the spirituality and extent of God's law; and then of the entire depravity and guilty condition of man. These things he saw clearly, and believed fully; and by following them up,

<sup>\*</sup> See Dwight's Theology, vol. II. page 189.

he was led into a belief of an entirely new system of doctrines; the influence of which on his future life and labors, is well known to the readers of his valuable works.

I should regret to have this work be the means of alienating such as are agreed in the great essentials of gospel doctrine, and whose differences are rather in words than ideas: but I am persuaded that it is no symptom of a thriving state of the church, when corruption in doctrine is thought a matter of indifference. And nothing can be a more certain indication that the church of Christ is in a declining state, than that errors, affecting the very vitals of the system of gospel truth, should pass unnoticed, or even be winked at. Paul strove to reconcile Christians who differed only in meats and drinks, and things relating to the outward court of God's house; but when their differences related to the leading truths of the gospel, the only way he strove to bring them together was, to persuade the erroneous to exchange their errors for the truth. When they could not be brought to do this, he made it the duty of the church to cut them off as troublers of Israel. Gal. i. 7, 8; v. 12.

V. *If the system of theology which has been exhibited in this work, is truth in harmony, then no scheme of doctrines which is fundamentally different, can be either true or harmonious.*

The system of theology which has been exhibited in the preceding pages, is not peculiar to the writer's own denomination; it has, in substance, been embraced by not a few in a number of the most distinguished denominations into which the protestant church has been divided. Though no particular book of theology, except the Bible, has lain before me to give shape to what I have written, yet I conclude that the statements which I have made concerning Christian doctrine, feeling, and practice, will very much accord with that system which, for two or three centuries past, has been denominated *Calvinism*; after John Calvin, one of the most eminent of the reformers.\* If what has been placed before the reader, (no matter by what name it be distinguished,) is the real system of truth revealed in the word of God, then the word of God can support none which is in opposition to it: nor can we expect to find any other which shall be in harmony with itself. The absurdity of proving two contrary schemes of doctrine, by the word of that God who can not deny himself, was shown in the beginning of this work: and it is very certain, that every scheme of doctrine which is fundamentally wrong, will be found to be, not merely contrary to the inspired word, but also *self-contradictory*. Every such scheme must be self-contradictory, for this reason; that the truth which it is obliged to adopt to give it plausibility, (and every scheme, except atheism, has some truth mingled with it,) will not coalesce with its errors: *for what communion hath light with darkness?* and what con-

\* Luther, the most distinguished among the reformers of the sixteenth century, had similar views concerning what are termed "the doctrines of grace." It is quite a mistaken opinion, which many have entertained, that the sentiments of Luther concerning these doctrines, were in agreement with what is now called Arminianism. The difference between these two reformers did not relate to the doctrines of salvation; but rather to the government and ordinances of the church.

cord hath truth with falsehood? Such a scheme of religion resembles the toes of the image that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream, which were part of iron, and part of clay. Though they are placed together, there is no common nature to unite them.

My remark will be illustrated, by referring to two or three of the different schemes of doctrine which are now propagated in the Christian world. The advocates of that scheme which is called *Universal restoration*, profess to believe that all men will be saved by the merits of *Christ*: and yet they believe that some men will be confined in the prison of hell, until they have suffered all the punishment which their sins deserve; and that after this, they will be admitted to heaven. This scheme is self-contradictory; because it represents sinners as suffering all the punishment they deserve, and yet as rescued from punishment by the sufferings of the Redeemer. The other class of Universalists, who deny all future punishment, profess to believe that sinners are saved wholly by *grace* through the atonement of Christ; and yet they assert that their eternal punishment would be totally incompatible, not only with the benevolence, but also with the *justice* of God. Now it is perfectly unharmonious and absurd, to talk of the *grace* of God in forgiving the sin, which it would be unjust for him to punish.

The *Arminian* scheme of doctrine has, perhaps, as much self-consistency, as any one which contains in it an equal degree of error. Arminians deny that total depravity is common to all who remain in unregeneracy. They also deny special grace in regeneration; personal election, or predestination unto holiness; and the certain perseverance in holiness, of those who are regenerated. In the denial of these doctrines, we feel confident that they have lost sight of the testimony of God's word: but, in itself considered, it appears to us consistent, that when they have denied the first of this chain of doctrines, they should deny the rest of them. If the sinfulness of the human heart be not entire, even up to the moment of passing from death unto life, it can require no new and special influence of the Spirit to renew the heart: nor can predestination be *unto* holiness, but because of holiness foreseen: and if God deems it inconsistent to impart a holy character by an immediate operation on the sinner's heart, we should naturally suppose that he would deem it inconsistent to engage so to operate on the heart of the saint, as infallibly to secure him against making shipwreck of his faith.

Although the Arminian scheme of doctrine has a degree of self-consistency, it is far from being harmonious throughout. Its advocates represent regeneration as a thing which is necessary to salvation; and they seem to distinguish between this and complete sanctification: and yet they do not acknowledge the entire sinfulness of all who are in a state of unregeneracy. There is no harmony between such a view of the unregenerate heart, and the doctrine of regeneration. It is impossible to give any consistent idea of regeneration, without acknowledging the entire sinfulness of such as have not experienced it. The Arminian scheme professes to acknowledge that there are two sorts of men in the present world—the good and the bad; and that, in the world to come, a complete and everlasting separation



will be made between them. This part of their creed harmonizes with the word of God; but it is at utter variance with that article of their belief, which excludes the doctrine of total depravity. By excluding this doctrine from their system, they virtually deny that there is a radical distinction of character among men: for if bad men are partly good, and good men are not sinlessly perfect, (and it will not be pretended that they are all so,) the line of separation between good and bad men, is unnatural and arbitrary.—There is a want of harmony between the *doctrines* and *prayers* of those who embrace this system. They often pray in a manner which is calculated to make the impression, that they depend on God to exert a direct influence on the sinner's heart; and yet, according to their creed, if he were to answer their prayer, by exerting such an influence, the convert would be nothing but a machine, and none the more lovely on account of his change. If, then, their creed be correct, such prayers ought not to be made; for who can help seeing, that it must be wrong to ask the infinite God to do such an inconsistent thing, as to convert moral agents into machines? Arminians believe that God will give eternal confirmation to the holiness of the saints in heaven, but deny that he insures their perseverance while on earth; affirming that this latter doctrine is inconsistent with that of free agency. But if his preserving the saints from a total apostacy on earth, be inconsistent with their free agency, how can it be consistent with such agency, that he should forever preserve them from the least transgression, when in the kingdom of heaven?

While the Arminian error arises from a perversion of the doctrine of man's free agency, the error of the *Antinomians* results from a perversion of the doctrine of his dependent agency. This latter scheme is wrong, just so far as it opposes the perfect and immediate obligation of all men, whether in a renewed or unrenewed state, to render unfeigned, and even entire obedience to the commands of God. There are various shades of Antinomianism; so that it is more difficult to give a definite view of it, than of most other errors. It is, however, the nature of the scheme to turn the grace of God into looseness—to make the doctrine of justification, through the Redeemer's righteousness, a reason for neglecting a close attention to personal righteousness; and to make our dependence on the agency of the Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify us, an excuse for the unrenewed sinner and the backslidden saint. This scheme, to be self-consistent, must make all personal holiness in believers useless, and a thing to which they ought not to be exhorted; for if we may be any more remiss in working out our salvation, because we have the Redeemer's righteousness to clothe us, why may we not neglect all attention to personal righteousness and purity of heart; since the *brought in* righteousness of the Redeemer is infinitely perfect? And yet, I conclude, there are few Antinomians who would carry their scheme to such an extent. Again: If the elect are not to be blamed for not repenting, till they are effectually wrought upon by the Spirit, the non-elect can not be blameworthy for never repenting; seeing they are never thus wrought upon. Nor can we see how it would be proper for men to repent, even when wrought upon by the Spirit, provided they had not been under a previous obligation to this duty. Why should they repent of those sins, which

they were not criminal in committing and retaining? If the Antinomians were fully to carry out the principles on which their scheme is built, it would present such a frightful form, that they would be ashamed to own it.

Calvinism is the mean between the two extremes of Arminianism, on the one hand, and Antinomianism, on the other. It is a system which acknowledges man's free agency and obligation in full: and this it does without denying or mutilating the doctrine of his absolute dependence on Divine righteousness and strength. If it has self-consistency throughout, it is no slender argument in favor of its truth: for it is no doubt a fact, that if all the heresies which have arisen in the church were to be thoroughly canvassed, a want of harmony, as well as of scriptural proof, would be found to characterize them all.

#### VI. *Divine truth is the only consistent bond of union in the Church of God.*

Paul, when speaking of this holy community, calls it "the church of the living God, *the pillar and ground of the truth.*" If this is its name, the *truth* must be its only consistent bond of union: for surely nothing could be more absurd, than to denominate any community the pillar and ground of the truth, whose agreement should consist in believing, loving, and practicing that which is false and erroneous.

When Christ Jesus witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate, he said that his kingdom was not of this world, but declared that the very end for which he came, was to bear witness of the truth: and then added: "Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice." From this declaration of the Savior we learn, that his kingdom (which is the same as his church) is a kingdom of *truth*; and that this is the very thing which will endear it to all upright ones in every part and period of the world.

That divine truth is the bond of union among Christians, is made very clear by John's epistle to the elect lady and her children; "whom," said he, "I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all that have known the truth; for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us forever." Here we learn, it is the truth that is in Christians, which makes them love one another; and that this holy union comprehends all that have known the truth; that have so known it as to have it dwell in their hearts. We also learn, that it is the perpetual abiding of the truth in their hearts, which secures their union from being dissolved.

But what is meant by a union founded on the truth? An answer to this inquiry is furnished by what has been said in this work concerning the reality and harmony of religious truth. We have seen that the word of God puts no value on religion, if it be not the *true* religion—that it makes no account of a religious creed, if it be not the belief of the truth—nor of religious feelings, if they be not the love of the truth—nor of religious worship, if it be not the worship of the true God—nor indeed of the worship of the true God, unless he be worshiped in spirit and in truth. That demand which was made by the apostle in relation to fellowship, has never been answered: "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what com-

munion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" 2 Cor. vi. 14—16. If the unrighteous have fellowship in unrighteousness, and infidels in their infidelity, and idolaters in the worship of idols; still there is nothing lovely in their fellowship. Neither is there anything lovely in the fellowship of Christians, any farther than it is the effect of truth and holiness.

The apostle, when speaking of the foundation which has been laid for union in the church of Christ, observes, "There is one body and one spirit—one Lord, one faith." The real unity of this mystical body can neither be produced nor preserved, except it be quickened and moved by one spirit, the Spirit of the living God; and be brought under one dominion, the dominion of the Lord Jesus; and adopt one system of faith, even that which is communicated in the scripture of truth. As this matter is often called in question, whether *one faith*, that is, one system of belief, be essential to the unity of the church, it demands our particular attention. If the worshipers of Jehovah, and the worshipers of idols, were to be formed into one religious society, there would be no consistent bond of union. How could they unite in worship, when their prayer is made to different deities? Our belief is the foundation of our practice. If we believe that Baal is God, we shall offer our prayers to Baal: and if we believe that the Lord is God, we shall pray to him. But it is not enough that we agree in giving the same *name* to the object of our worship; we must be agreed concerning his *character*; else there is no bond of union between us. How can those who possess jarring opinions concerning the moral perfection of God, unite in the same prayer? He who believes that vengeance belongeth unto God, and that it helps constitute the beauty of his holiness, will pray according to his belief. In his confessions of sin and ill-desert, he will acknowledge that he and all his fellow worshipers, might justly be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. But how can *they* unite in such confessions, who believe that a being that can punish sin after this sort, is a hateful character? Among those who profess the religion of Christ, there are some who believe that, in point of justification, their best performances may well be called filthy rags, and that an infinite atonement for sin is their only ground of hope: and there are others who believe that the doctrine of an atonement for sin, is extremely foolish. With such discordant sentiments on a subject which is brought into view with every prayer, how can they unite in their devotions? It is the full belief of some, that the hearts of all unregenerated men are evil, and only evil, having no exercises which are in conformity to divine requirements, nor desires for conformity: they are therefore led to pray for their conversion as an act of mere sovereign mercy. How can those, who have no such views of the character of the unregenerate, and their dependence on sovereign mercy, cordially join in these prayers? They who believe there is a covenant of everlasting mercy established with every penitent sinner, will not unfrequently be led, by such a belief, to offer prayers which will be entirely repugnant to their views who disbelieve the existence



of such a covenant. I have introduced these as a few specimens, to show that an agreement in the leading articles of our belief, is necessary to lay a foundation for us to unite together in the worship of God.

The creed which men have adopted, gives a shape to their sermons, if they are ministers of the word; and to their conversation, if they are private members of the church. It often happens among the members of the visible family of Christ, that what is taught in a sermon is highly approved by some, as precious truth; and as highly reprobated by others, as dangerous error. While we entertain opinions which are essentially different concerning any of the leading doctrines of the Bible; for example, the *counsel* and *agency* of God; we can hardly confer together without injuring each other's feelings: for such remarks on the passing events of Providence, as will seem intelligible and interesting to those who have adopted one system of faith, will sound harsh and discordant to men of different sentiments. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" Intellectual beings of very different capacities, can have fellowship together. Believers of strong faith can have fellowship with believers whose faith is weak; angels can have fellowship with men; and the Creator with his creatures. But in none of these cases could they walk together, if they were not agreed. God can have fellowship with us, though we know but a little of his excellent greatness, provided that we love what we know of it; but if we have hated what we have seen, he can have no delight in us. And they who are strong in faith can have sweet communion with the babes in Christ, when these appear to approve the things that are excellent, as far as they have been instructed in them. If they love what they know of the truth, it forms a bond of union; but when the *knowledge* of the truth seems to alienate their hearts from it, fellowship is rendered difficult, if not impossible.

Is truth in doctrine the basis of all true religion in feeling and practice, as we have seen; then it is no proper way of promoting the unity of the church, to treat it as a thing of little importance—to consent to give the name of truth to every creed in Christendom; or to agree that we will all be united, while our articles of faith are discordant. This was not the way which was taken by the apostles. Under one of the preceding Remarks, I had occasion to show what were the sentiments of Paul, Peter, and John, on the subject of heresy. Nor did the apostle Jude pass over this subject in silence, though his epistle is short. "It was needful for me," said he to the sanctified, "to write unto you and exhort you; that ye should contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints." The way which he proposed for the preservation of the unity of the church, was to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. And what was the way which the Head of the church took to give unity to his own body? We hear him say, Beware of false prophets—beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees; that is, beware of their *doctrine*. We hear him exclude from charity the Pharisees, who constituted a famous sect in the Jewish church. He excluded them all in a mass, when he said to his hearers, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

In the days of Christ and the apostles, circumstantial differences among the friends of Christ, were made no barrier to communion.—When the beloved disciple told his Master, that they forbade the man whom they saw casting out devils in his name, because he did not follow them, “Jesus said, Forbid him not ; for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me : for he that is not against us, is on our part.” And when Paul saw some who were disposed to make a schism in the church, by the question about meats and drinks, and things which did not affect the vitals of religion, he strongly urged mutual forbearance on those who entertained different opinions. The unity of the church may not require a perfect uniformity, in respect to all the *modes* and *forms* of religion. To treat of these, did not particularly come within the plan of this work : and where the subject might have embraced them, I have thought it expedient to leave them out ; and for this, among other reasons, that they seem not to lay the foundation for holiness of character, like that instruction which relates to doctrine, experience, and common Christian duties. They are not such connected links in the chain of truth, that we are drawn into correct views concerning them, by the same kind of necessity by which we are drawn into the doctrines of grace, as being the natural fruit of that spiritual birth, in which the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. I conclude that men can be found in a number of Christian denominations, differing in the circumstantials of worship, who will be able to read the book now before them with equal approbation. And the edification of them all, without distinction of denomination, is the heart’s desire and prayer of the writer.

If divine truth is the only consistent bond of union in the church of God, it would be no favorable symptom of her near approach to the time of her greatest prosperity, should there be a growing indifference to the fundamental doctrines of the Bible. If any have pictured to themselves the millennial church as indifferent to doctrinal truth ; if they have made its glory to consist in a mere suspension of hostilities between orthodoxy and heresy ; or in a general amalgamation of all the creeds in Christendom ; their view of the millennial church is very different from my own. Was it for this very end that Christ came into the world, to bear witness unto the truth—was the Spirit sent to lead into all truth—has a church been set up in this world of error and delusion, to be the pillar and ground of the truth—have prophets, apostles, and martyrs ventured their lives in bearing witness to the truth ; and can it be, when the church shall have arrived at the zenith of her glory, it will be found that the truth is of little consequence ? This can not be. The event will show, that he who wills that all men should be saved, designs to effect it by their coming to the knowledge of the truth. 1 Tim. ii. 4. Truth will be the bond of union in that blessed time, when there shall be such a universal and permanent peace, that they will not learn war any more. Of that period the prophet speaks when he says, “The watchmen shall lift up the voice ; with the voice together shall they sing : for they shall see eye to eye when the Lord shall bring again Zion.” This prediction imports, that in the favored time referred to, the watchmen of Zion shall see alike, and speak

alike. This supposes that there is something in which they will be entirely agreed. And what can it be, but divine truth, that shall constitute the matter of their testimony? It is God's promise to Israel and Judah, that in the time of their future restoration, he will give them *one heart* and *one way*, that they may fear him forever. The same will also be done for the fullness of the gentiles, when they shall come in; as appears by this prediction in the book of Zephaniah: "For then will I turn to the people (that is, the remnant of the gentiles) a pure language, that they may call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him *with one consent*."

Should differences be found in the millennial church, we may be assured they will not relate to fundamentals, either in doctrine, experience, or practice. All will believe in Jehovah, the true God; and will agree in attributing to him the same natural and moral perfections: "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be *one Lord*, and his name *one*." Zech. xiv. 9. When the whole congregation of the Lord shall become agreed on this one question, What is the character of the God of the Bible? they will soon be agreed on every important point in theology. They will now necessarily become agreed in their views of God's law—the obligation of his creatures to obey it—their guilt for disobedience—and their need of an atonement, even one of infinite value, to render the forgiveness of their sins consistent with the honor of the Lawgiver, the stability of the law, and the good of the moral system. Nor can I think, that when the question relating to the natural and moral perfection of God, is once settled, there will be any material difference concerning any of those Articles of doctrine, experience, or practice, which have been introduced into this treatise.

While all indifference to the truth, whether it relate to the doctrines, the inward feelings, or the external duties of religion, should cause us to grieve, we ought to consider it as a symptom of the approach of better days, when inconsiderable differences in opinion or practice, are not made walls of separation between those who are agreed in the great essentials of our holy religion. It is also favorable to see such as belong to different communions of the Christian church, unite in promoting the common cause, so far as such a union implies no surrender of gospel truth. It would be matter of rejoicing, were religious discussions to be carried on in a more cool and dispassionate manner. It gives great satisfaction to such as love the truth, to see those who are called forth as its public advocates, conform to that direction of Him who came to bear witness unto the truth: "Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves"—and to that corresponding direction of his apostle: "In meekness instructing those who oppose themselves; if, peradventure, God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth."

VII. *The church is the light of the world, only so far as she reflects the radiations of divine truth.*

As gospel truth is, and ever must be, the only bond of union to the church, so does it constitute that light, which she is required to reflect upon a world enveloped in moral darkness. The church shines with



borrowed light—light which she derives from the Sun of righteousness. It was his glory to be the true Witness, full of grace and truth : it is her glory that she has received of his fullness, and is thereby made the pillar and ground of the truth. To a world full of religious error he came, to dispel the darkness and bear witness of the truth. But having now withdrawn himself, he has constituted his disciples, in a subordinate sense, the light of the world. To them he says, “ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” In the spirit of this injunction, Paul says to the saints at Philippi, “ Do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life.”

On mount Zion there shines a light, which the God of Zion has determined shall dispel the moral darkness of this fallen world. But what is that light but the truth ? Divest the church of the truth, and her light is put out at once. There is nothing except truth which has any light in it ; for surely error is nothing but darkness. The truth professed, felt, and acted out, comprises all the light there is in the followers of Christ. They shine as lights in the world, by “ holding forth the word of life,” both in their instructions and examples. Were they to teach *false doctrines*, instead of those which are true, this would be darkness and not light. It is only by the manifestation of *the truth*, that we can commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. Were the church to become so totally indifferent to the truth, that the word of God should cease to be made the standard of her creeds, sermons, and books, her light would be extinguished. She would have no advantage over those who embrace Islamism, or any other false religion. The same may be said in relation to her *examples*. Let us once contemplate the church as not distinguished from the world by that life of holy obedience which is described by “ walking in the truth ; ” and where would be her light ? Does it consist in a mere profession—a lamp without oil—in saying, Lord, Lord, without obedience to the commands of Christ ? Were the members of Christ’s family to be distinguished from other men by nothing more than their attendance on sacraments, they could with no propriety be characterized as “ a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

Truth in *experience* is no less necessary to the light of the church, than truth in doctrine and practice. Without experimental religion, even that which is *truth in the inward parts*, her light would be no better than darkness. Will a lamp without oil, burn and give light ? And can we expect that a church, made up of graceless members, will produce those good works by which the world is benefited and God glorified ? No inward change which is not based on the truth, can be expected to result in such an external reformation, as shall resemble a clear and permanent light. And any external light which the professors of religion exhibit, however brilliant it may appear, unless it is supposed to be the result of purity of heart, will be repulsive rather than attractive. As the light of good works is obscured or wholly prevented, when the light of grace is wanting in the heart ; so this

last is prevented by withholding the light of doctrinal truth, in the ministry of the word and other means of instruction. It is by the word of truth that men are begotten to a holy life ; and the whole process of sanctification is effected by the same means.

The darkness that covers the earth, and the gross darkness which covers the people, is the darkness of sin and of religious delusion.— This is that which the light of the church is ordained to dispel. But before she can effect so desirable an object, she needs to arise and shine ; for surely, *her darkness* has no tendency to dispel that darkness which envelops the world. Her numbers can not be so multiplied, nor her wealth so increased, as to qualify her to be the world's light. The church of Rome has many members, and great resources ; but her light is darkness ; for neither her doctrine, nor practice, is in agreement with the truth of God's word. The glorious reformation from popery, which took place in the early part of the sixteenth century, was effected by the light of truth. The zeal of the Reformers would have effected no such desirable reformation, had they not approved themselves by the word of truth. This was the sword of the Spirit, by means of which such a victory was won. And why is the glory departed from many of the reformed churches ? Is it not, manifestly, because the truth is prostrated in their streets, sanctuaries, and theological seminaries ? The churches may still retain the name of *Reformed* ; and the more distinctive name of Lutheran and Calvinistic ; but if those glorious truths which were believed and inculcated by the Reformers, and particularly by those men after whose names they are called, have ceased to be inculcated and believed, their sun is gone down.

Is divine truth that which gives lustre to the church ; and is it by the instrumentality of her light, that the darkness of a sinful world is to be scattered away ? How important, then, that every exertion should be made to bring her under the full influence of gospel truth. No one thing seems to present such an obstacle in the way of the recovery of our fallen world, as that mighty mass of error, both in doctrine and practice, which exists in the visible church. How can she, thus darkened by error and sin, cause her light to shine to the ends of the earth ? With God all things are possible ; and to Him it behooves us to repair, and say, " Arise, O God, and plead thine own cause." But while our ultimate dependence is to be placed on Him alone, we should be no less diligent in employing means to advance the cause of truth, than if it wholly depended on our own exertions.

There is a certain number now on the earth, whom the Lord knoweth to be his. These have been called out of darkness into marvelous light, and are truly the children of the light and of the day. These must not sleep, as do others, but put on the armor of light, and make a vigorous stand against the attacks of the enemy. It behooves them to grow in grace and in the knowledge of divine truth ; especially in the knowledge of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. They should also be " valiant for the truth upon the earth ;" and should begin by striving to increase the knowledge of it, in all those particular congregations and regions where they are dispersed. To them it must appear as important as the glory of God, and the salvation of men, that the or-

thodoxy of the scriptures should be preached, understood, and received. It is also incumbent on these friends of the truth, to do what in them lies to revive and support gospel discipline in their several churches ; so that those members who have embraced dangerous heresies, may either be brought to heartily renounce them, or be excluded from the household of faith.

Whether the *unity*, or the *light* of the church be considered, there can be nothing of greater importance than that we vigilantly guard its door of entrance. None should be admitted, except such as give evidence of love to the truth. Let all who name the name of Christ, and especially the officers of the church, be cautioned, as they love Zion the city of our God, and as they love the souls of such as are yet in the bond of iniquity, to observe great circumspection in the admission of new members. We are bound to rejoice in the additions which are made to the church, when those who are received, give satisfactory evidence that they have first been added to the Lord. But is it not apparent, that the cause of truth suffers more from a redundancy, than from a scarcity of members ? We know that the servants of Christ can not search hearts, like their Master ; but let them be entreated to pray and strive to be kept from putting into God's building, such a great proportion of hay, wood, and stubble, as have been put into it in years and generations that are passed. See 1 Cor. iii. 9—15.

Since it is important to the cause of truth, that great care should be used in examining into the belief, the experiences, and life, of those who are to be admitted as private members of the household of faith, how very consequential it must be that the office-bearers, especially they who labor in word and doctrine, should be men who give decided evidence that they are not ashamed of Christ, nor of his *words*. The light of the church can not be bright, when the work of the ministry is in the hands of ignorant men ; or in the hands of men of corrupt manners ; or men of an unsound faith. If they who guard the door of admission into the church, need to be circumspect, how much more do they need to be so, who are entrusted with the work of introducing men into the holy ministry. The qualifications for the ministry are described, and they who have been already invested with the office, are charged to commit it to faithful men, who shall be able to understand and teach the truth ; and in doing this, they are cautioned to lay the hands of consecration suddenly on no man. As they who love Zion, and long for the conversion of a wicked world, must be exceedingly gratified with an enlightened, orthodox, and holy ministry, let them not fail to pray much for them who now hold this responsible office : and let them not forget to pray, that such as shall hereafter be introduced into it, may all of them be taught of the Lord, and be well qualified for their work.

A great accession is made to the light of the church, when the Lord is pleased to bring false teachers, who are men of talents and education, to understand and preach the truth. What a blessing has the church lately received in the writings of the author of "The Force of Truth," and in the writings of a number of others, on both sides of the Atlantic ; men whose conversion to the love of the truth, according to their own statements, was subsequent to their entrance into the sacred min-



istry. What a blessing did the church formerly experience in the conversion of Augustine, who, from a corrupt heretic, was transformed into an able defender of the truth ; and particularly of those doctrines which have been called “the doctrines of grace.” And what a still greater blessing did she receive before that, by the conversion and apostleship of him who was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel ; and who, without that conversion, would have been nothing better than a Pharisaic doctor of the law, and an intolerant persecutor of the friends of the truth. Should a *great company* of such *priests become obedient to the faith*, we should have reason to expect that the word of God would increase, (i. e. in the frequency and clearness of its exhibitions,) and that the number of disciples would be greatly multiplied. See Acts vi. 7.

Since the greater part of those who now enter into the sacred ministry, among the different denominations of Christians, go through with their theological studies at public seminaries, the light of the church depends greatly on the character of these *schools of the prophets*. Should their light become darkness, how great will be that darkness ! May the Spirit of truth guide all their researches, and may the word of truth be the standard of all their sentiments !

It is important that all the instructions which are furnished by the church for the benefit of the rising generation, should be in accordance with the truth as it is in Jesus. It is of no small importance, that all the religious instruction which parents give their children, should be of this character ; as also the instruction given in Bible classes, and in all the classes which are taught in our numerous Sabbath schools. Nor should a single tract be published, however ornamental its dress, if it be not in agreement with the word of truth.—But let none imagine that we design to make an orthodox *creed* to constitute all the light of the church. We well know that unless we are sanctified, we are not the children of the light. The church, destitute of true holiness, would be an opaque, and not a luminous body. But since it is through the truth that the hearts of men are sanctified, without its irradiating influence, the light of holiness will never shiue forth. Truth renders us beautiful, only when it makes us holy.

VIII. *Since experimental religion is no other than divine truth influencing the heart, we may safely infer that a religious excitement, to be genuine, must be effected by a clear exhibition of gospel truth.*

The substance of this remark has been anticipated by some of those which have preceded it ; but its great importance, at the present period of the church, furnishes a reason for giving it a distinct place. By a *religious excitement*, I mean an awakened attention to the subject of religion among the impenitent, when numbers are almost simultaneously excited, not only to think on their ways, but apparently to turn their feet into God’s testimonies. A number of such excitements are mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. There was a very remarkable one which began at Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, and continued for some time afterwards. There was another at Samaria ; another at Cesarea, where the gentiles first received the word ; another at Antioch ; and another at Corinth. Indeed, a religious excitement

appears to have been a common occurrence in the apostolic age.— See Acts ii. iv. viii. x. xi. xviii. &c. In this world of apostacy, where so few have as yet become reconciled to God, it is desirable that there should be something more than solitary conversions. It ought to be our earnest desire and prayer to God, that wherever we lift up our eyes, we may see whole fields already white to the harvest.

No artificial methods are needed to produce an excitement. There is no magic, no charm to be used. Nor is there in this matter any secret which can not be learned by every one who will attentively and prayerfully read the word of God. Let us first impress our minds with the object which we would obtain. It is nothing less than the conversion and eternal salvation of those of our fellow men, who remain as yet without an interest in a Savior's death, and consequently in a state of condemnation. Christ informs us that men must know the truth; and that it is by knowing the truth that they are to be made free. Peter told the Christians to whom he wrote, that they had purified their souls in obeying the truth. This is certain, that the truth of the gospel, if it be known, loved, and obeyed, will save the souls of men. And this is the only way they can be saved. But to this way unbelievers have a strong, yea, a total aversion. Our ultimate dependence for the conversion of unbelievers, is on that special divine agency, which the apostle denominates "the renewing of the Holy Ghost."—The Savior says, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing." The fleshly or carnal heart never quickens itself. No man is born of the will of the flesh. All our attempts, therefore, to effect the conversion of sinners, without the aid of the Spirit of God, are impious and vain. If the Spirit is our ultimate dependence, his aid must be sought, and such means must be used on our part as will meet his approbation. He is "the Spirit of *truth*;" and the scriptures, being the fruit of his inspiration, will safely guide us in this, as well as in all our other ways.

Though the Holy Ghost is the efficient cause of every conversion, yet the church has always been made the spiritual mother of the converts whom the Lord has added to her communion. "As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." Isa. lxvi. 8. See also Sol. Song iii. 4, and viii. 5. The prayers and other efforts of the church are, in the economy of grace, made necessary to her being increased and perpetuated by new converts. The divine arrangement seems to be this; that a revival of the religion of the church must precede, and prepare the way for, the awakened attention and conversion of the impenitent. Before that great excitement among the impenitent, which took place on the day of Pentecost, the church was greatly revived; which was manifested by their continuing with one accord in supplication and prayer. To prepare the way for the conversion of sinners, the prayers of God's people must be fervent, united, and importunate. Nor is this enough, unless they are in accordance with the scheme of redemption by Jesus Christ; for none except holy, humble petitions, presented in the Redeemer's name, will avail anything to call down the influences of the Holy Spirit.

Christ has appointed his people to be the salt of the earth, and the

light of the world ; and has let them know that if their salt shall lose its savor, and their light its lustre, it will hinder their exerting a salutary influence on the unconverted world by which they are surrounded. There is, therefore, but little hope that the truth will have a powerful and transforming influence on such of the unconverted, as are placed in the neighborhood of any section of the church of Christ in which the standard of piety is low. A tender concern for those of the impenitent who have such a location, will prompt us to seek first, if possible, to revive the church, by raising the tone of doctrinal, experimental, and practical religion. The church must be excited to prepare the way of the Lord, by removing all stumbling blocks ; and she must engage in this work, not as a matter of secondary, but of primary importance. The Spirit and the bride must be united in presenting the gospel invitation to an unbelieving world. See Rev. xxii. 17. The Spirit is always awake ; but the bride has her drowsy seasons ; and these prove exceedingly prejudicial to the immortal interests of her impenitent children and neighbors. To awake her from this drowsiness, is a matter of higher importance to the honor of God and the salvation of men, than has ever yet been conceived of.

To produce a religious excitement among the impenitent, we must not only pour forth holy petitions for them, and allure them by the light of such an example as may, with propriety, be called *walking in the truth* ; but we are under obligation to make direct appeals to their consciences. And how, it may be asked, shall we know what to say to them ? If we would make them true converts, or, in other words, converts to the truth, we must tell them the truth, the whole truth,—in doctrine, experience, and practice. When Christ had said, “ It is the Spirit that quickeneth,” he added, “ The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” Though his words, without the Spirit, could not quicken such as were dead in sin ; yet they were the words which, in the hand of the Spirit, were themselves *spirit and life*. Should the ministers of the word, or any others, who seek to awaken and convert their fellow men, imagine they had discovered a more easy and effectual method of accomplishing this object, than by plain and unequivocal exhibitions of scriptural truth ; must they not have lost sight of their entire dependence on the influence of the Spirit of God ? Can they suppose that the Holy Spirit will be more likely to help them to effect the conversion of sinners in *their* way, than in *his own* way ? “ This only would I learn of you,” said Paul to the Galatians, “ received ye the Spirit by the deeds of the law, or by the hearing of faith ?” The great object of his epistle to them was, to establish the doctrine of a free justification, in opposition to a justification by the works of the law : and this demand which he made of them intimated, that the Spirit did not attend the preaching of both doctrines, but confined his operations to the one which was according to the truth. When fundamental truths are perverted or withheld, there is no reason to expect that the Spirit of truth will descend with his quickening influences ; since such a descent would imply his bearing witness to that which is false. If, at any time, an excitement should take place, where the doctrines used to promote it were subversive of the gospel scheme of grace, there would be reason to believe



it to be a mere work of men, which will come to nought ; or a work of that spirit of darkness, who is transformed into an angel of light.

Paul speaks of himself as doing the same thing which the Spirit of God did, because, as a minister of the word, he furnished the means by which the Spirit effected the work. "For in Christ Jesus," said he, "I have begotten you through the gospel." He preached the same system of truth which the Spirit has inspired, and by means of which it pleases him to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. When the Spirit undertakes to turn men from the power of satan unto God, he first convinces them of sin. And to help on such conviction, must be made a capital object by all who would do anything to effect their conversion. To promote conviction, they must be shown the entire selfishness and desperate wickedness of their heart ; and that this wicked heart has been the fountain of all their affections and actions. To give them a view of their own vileness, the holiness of God and of his violated law, must be distinctly placed before them. As the Spirit also convinces of righteousness, even a righteousness through which grace reigns unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord, it behooves us, in seeking the conversion of sinners, to place before them the atonement of Christ in all its extent and fullness, as well as its adaptation to their wretched condition ; and then to urge their immediate and cordial acceptance of it, as one of the greatest and most imperious duties which they owe to God, and to themselves.

While we show sinners their *natural ability* to accept the gospel offer, to make them see that if they perish, the fault will be their own ; it is no less incumbent on us to show them their *moral inability*, (whatever name we may see fit to give to the obstinacy of their rebellion,) that they may know, if they do not perish, it will be because God, who is rich in mercy, can quicken them even when they are dead in their sins. By withholding this doctrine, we should neglect to furnish the Spirit with one of those means which he makes use of in effecting the conversion of unbelievers. Should we fail to teach the doctrine of moral impotency, sinners would not learn, (at least they would not learn from their teachers,) that they need the power of God to cause them to become the willing subjects of his kingdom. If one side of gospel truth be presented to the hearers, and the other side be always concealed, we endanger their souls. Were we to tell men of their obligation to accept proffered mercy, and never say anything to them concerning that gracious operation, which lays the only foundation to hope they ever will accept it, we should preach a mutilated gospel : and there would be danger that such a mutilated gospel would either drive them to despair, or issue in a hope which would make them ashamed.

The sovereignty of God's grace in renewing the hearts of men, and his purpose in bestowing this grace, are among the things which are revealed, and therefore they belong to us and to our children. Nor have I any doubt that these are doctrines whose influence is needed in a time of anxious inquiry concerning salvation. They are needed as means of discovering more fully the depravity of the heart—of preventing the despair of those who are brought to see there is no help

in themselves; and of giving a purer character to the hope they may obtain. Prudence may be necessary in determining the order in which the doctrines of the scheme of grace shall be presented; but it is not the province of prudence to determine how many of them shall be exhibited, and how many suppressed. A time of religious excitement, we know, is both an interesting and a critical season; and nothing ought to be done to hinder its progress. But the purity of the work is the only thing which renders it desirable. And what can be so calculated to make the work pure, as a full, clear, and unvarnished exhibition of gospel truth?\*

It is the work of the Spirit to renew the heart, and plant the fear of God in the soul: there can therefore be no doubt of the propriety of taking a time of excitement, to preach and converse freely on experimental religion. This is that part of religion to which the Spirit is supposed, at such a time, to give existence in subjects who have heretofore been ignorant of it; therefore there is now, if ever, a call to present it with all possible clearness, and show the disinterested nature of a true Christian experience in all its branches, and how it can be distinguished from all counterfeits. Practical religion is also to be explained and enforced as means of promoting a work of the Spirit. He who was sent to prepare the way of the Lord, preached practical religion, when he said to the multitudes who flocked to his baptism, (for

\* In the early part of my ministry, I became acquainted with an aged saint, whose hope was obtained in the days of Whitefield and Edwards; and which had been improving through a long life of exemplary piety. I have always remembered one particular which he related to me concerning his conversion. Under conviction, he said he felt great opposition to the doctrine of election, and to God's sovereignty in making a difference between sinners, by granting regenerating grace to some, in distinction from others. "But," said he, "one evening, while I was attempting to pray, that text came into my mind: 'For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion;' and it was accompanied with a pleasing sense of the perfect equity of God, in exercising such sovereignty in the bestowment of his mercy." I did not get the idea that this text gave him comfort, by bringing any assurance to his mind, that he was one of those whom God had chosen to be the objects of his special mercy; but rather by discovering to him the propriety and excellency of the doctrine with which he had been contending. Now let me put this question to my reader: Had this man, when he was in an anxious state, been persuaded either to disbelieve this doctrine, or to lay it aside as a thing with which he had no right to meddle, would the evidence of his conversion have been equally good? And would there have been as much reason for expecting to see it followed by a life of communion with God?

The reader will indulge me in referring to another incident, to show the use which the Holy Spirit makes of the doctrine of discriminating grace, in promoting conviction of sin. The incident relates to myself. During the time my mind was in an anxious state, I one Sabbath heard two very inviting sermons from the same text, which greatly attracted my attention. While hearing them, I fancied myself on the point of accepting the gospel offer of mercy; and supposed that but little more was needed to turn the scale, and make me a convert. At the close of the second service, I was rejoiced to hear it announced, that another sermon might be expected in the evening; flattering myself that this would be enough, in addition to what I had already heard, to effect my conversion. The evening sermon contained a sentence or two, which served to turn my mind to the subject of distinguishing grace. It did not bring those comforts which were looked for; but it answered a purpose which, at that time, was much more needful; namely, that of discovering the dreadful enmity of my heart against God. The sermons I heard in the day-time were good; but what I heard in the evening, was the thing I then especially needed, to prevent me from thinking myself a friend of God, without having been first convinced that I was his enemy.

To tell the awakened sinner that he hates God, is not so effectual a method to make him feel it, as to place before him, with all possible clearness, the character of the God he hates. Then he will see for himself that he hates God.

it was a time of much excitement,) “Bring forth fruits meet for repentance.”

In seeking to excite and promote an awakened attention to religion, our eye should be single, that all we do to effect it, may be full of light. Let our object not be to gain numbers to a party—to make *our church* look more respectable—or to acquire the reputation of being “revival men.” Let us desire to advance the kingdom of Christ, by bringing our fellow men to feel their obligation to love and serve him. Let us earnestly desire that they may become *new creatures*; that they may be such as will endure to the end, and be prepared for the blessedness of that high and holy place, where it will be eternal life to know the only living and true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Let us desire to number among our converts, none but such as are genuine.

To sum up all, the great secret is this: If we would promote among sinners a work of *truth* and *grace*, all which we do to promote it must be in accordance with truth and grace. Our *prayers* for them must be in the spirit of revealed truth. In all our treatment of them, and indeed in all our other conduct, we must live in strict conformity to the truth of the gospel. In our preaching to them, and conversing with them, we must present the truth of God’s word, and especially in relation to the salvation of sinners, with clearness, boldness, and tender affection. Let this method be adopted and pursued with increasing zeal, and with reliance on the aid of the Holy Spirit; and if it prove unsuccessful, there is no other which can be adopted in its room, without doing injury to the cause of *truth*.

IX. *In view of the reality, importance, and harmony of revealed truth, we infer that the ministry of the word must be a great and responsible work.*

The ministers of the word are “set for the defense of the gospel.” The gospel is that religion which the scriptures reveal, and which they declare to be the only religion on earth that is founded in truth.—No other scheme ascribes to God the glory due to his name, or points out a way of deliverance from sin and ruin for apostate man. Therefore it is, that the honor of God, and the everlasting well-being of the children of men, both conspire to give importance and responsibility to that office which is appointed for its defense. If *another gospel*, different from that which is based on truth, be preached, its tendency will not be salutary, but extremely mischievous. It will sully the glory of God, and prevent the salvation of men: and thus the very design of God in the institution of the ministry, will be frustrated.

When Paul took leave of the Ephesian elders, and, through them, of the church over which they presided, he could say, “I am pure from the blood of all men.” But this he could not have said, had he not been able to add, “for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” It must be a satisfaction to us, my brethren, who have taken part of this ministry, when we shall be called to quit our work and render up our account, should we then be able to say, *We are pure from the blood of all men*; and be able to adduce the same proof of it as did “our beloved brother Paul.” But when can a minister of the word say, “I have not shunned to declare all the counsel



of God?" He can say this, when he has been careful to preach *no* religion except that which is contained in God's word; and when he has plainly, fearlessly, solemnly, and affectionately preached the *whole* of this. He can adopt this comfortable language, when he has not only preached *some* of the doctrines of the Bible, but *all* of them; and also shown that there is no discord, but a sweet harmony among these doctrines: and when he has preached not only the *doctrinal*, but also the *experimental* part of religion; having shown its pure, unselfish nature—its various branches—its discriminating marks—its agreement with doctrinal truth—and its absolute necessity to qualify us either to please or to enjoy, the God of holiness. In addition to this, it must be true, that he has inculcated the universal obligation of *practical* religion; namely, obedience to the first and second tables of the law; the duties of which are comprised in fearing God and regarding man: and that he has shown the certain connection between holy experiences and holy practices—between truth in the inward parts, and truth in our external actions.

Should a minister of the word take the most important or the most trying doctrine, and make it his only theme, to the exclusion of the other doctrines of the Bible, he could not say, "I have not shunned to declare all the counsel of God." Nor could he say this, in case he had dwelt on one particular branch of experimental or practical religion, to the neglect of the other branches. In fact, we can not say that we have fully preached any particular part of doctrinal, experimental, or practical religion, unless we have shown its connection and harmony with the other parts of the system of divine truth. There is no other way to give consistency to our ministry, and make it edifying and safe to our hearers, except by resolving that we will not shun to declare *all* the counsel of God.

There are hearers who are quite opposed to the preaching of doctrines; and of some doctrines in particular. To please such hearers, we must omit doctrines altogether; or at least those which they dislike. They wish to hear nothing from the pulpit except that which relates to *Christian experience*. There is another class of hearers who are wholly for *doctrines*, to the exclusion of gracious experiences; and another class who wish us to confine ourselves to *practical* subjects; by which they would mean the mere external part of religion. In this view of things, we can see the danger is great, that we shall not declare all the counsel of God. Were we to make the pleasing of men our object, we could never do it. Neither could Paul have done it, had he not been governed by a higher motive. "For if I yet pleased men," said the holy apostle, "I should not be the servant of Christ." If, then, our hearers come forward with their various proposals; some, that we would preach all doctrines, and others, that we would preach *no* doctrines; some, that we would preach altogether on experimental religion, and others, that we would omit it entirely; some, that we would confine ourselves to practical subjects, and others, that we would preach nothing beyond mere morality: we may have a common answer for them all; and in substance, it should be this: "We are under the most solemn oath, as witnesses for God, to declare the truth—the whole of revealed truth, concerning Christian doctrine, experi-

ence, and practice. Our commission from above is to preach the *gospel*—to speak *all the words of this life*—to speak all that is commanded us of God, and *not diminish a word*. Mark xvi. 15. Acts v. 20, and x. 33. Jer. xxvi. 2.

Had the object of Christ, in committing to some the ministry of the word, been nothing more than to furnish means for their fellow men to pass a vacant day more pleasantly, it might be consistent for the preacher to accommodate himself to the taste and wishes of his hearers, in the selection both of his topics and his sentiments. But the case is quite different from this. It ought to be remembered, that the gospel ministry is “the ministry of *reconciliation*.” The very design of its institution is, to employ means to bring rebellious men to be reconciled to God. And surely no one can pretend, that a false theology will have any tendency to effect our reconciliation with the God of truth.

Were it a fact, (as some men, besides professed infidels, seem to believe,) that the Bible contains a heterogeneous mass of religious matter, every preacher might with propriety be allowed to make such a selection from this mass, as would suit his own taste, and that of his hearers : but if the religion of the Bible is *one*—one harmonious system of divine truth ; comprehending doctrines to be believed, affections to be exercised, and duties to be done : and if all these doctrines to be believed, and affections to be exercised, and duties to be done, are the revealed will of God ; right in themselves, and in accordance with each other ; then no preacher of the word can be allowed such liberties. All who take part of this ministry, let them be of whatever nation or communion, are under solemn obligation to preach the same faith. We are in the situation of those ambassadors who have no discretionary powers, but are wholly limited by their written instructions. No system of divinity written by ever so learned a divine, nor confession of faith drawn up and agreed to by ever so venerable a council of uninspired men, is to be made the standard of our preaching. It is not enough that every preacher conforms to the standards of his own church ; since there is one supreme standard, by which all others are to be tried, and to which we are all equally bound to conform. How does it concern every minister of the word, to become intimately acquainted with this inspired standard, which is not only to furnish a text for every one of his sermons, but to give shape and character to all his instructions.

If truth in doctrine lies at the foundation of all that experimental religion which is genuine ; and this at the foundation of all those good works with which God is well pleased, and which he has promised to reward ; what an unspeakable calamity are those teachers, who err concerning the doctrines that are fundamental to the religion of the gospel. Such are said to take away the key of knowledge, and thereby to prevent those who confide in their instructions, from entering the kingdom of heaven. Luke xi. 52. Even where the written word is in the hands of all the people, there is little reason to expect that the true doctrines will be embraced by many, if the accredited teachers are such as have departed from the truth. There is, ordinarily, no hope of seeing a work of reformation, where the priest's lips do not

keep knowledge, so that the people can seek the law at his mouth. It was when it could be said of Levi, "The law of truth was in his mouth," that it could also be said, "he did turn many away from iniquity." Mal. ii. 6. Who is anticipating that revivals of religion of a right character, will take place under Romish priests, while, instead of the pure doctrines of Christ, they preach the corrupt doctrines of their own church? Or who is expecting that the German divines, with their Unitarian *rationalism*, will be instrumental in exciting sinners to inquire, What must we do to be saved? A corrupt ministry will invariably make a corrupt church. Or if such a ministry grow out of the corruption of the church, it is among the most powerful means of perpetuating that corruption.

Some may think that Paul gave a different view of a minister's duty from the one now given, when he declared it to be his determination, to know nothing among those to whom he was sent, *save Jesus Christ and him crucified*. That he did not intend to confine his preaching to one topic, we may infer from his various epistles, and from those parts of his sermons that are given us in the Acts of the Apostles; in which we find a variety of topics are introduced. Nothing less than an exhibition of the whole system of divine truth, can be considered as preaching, in the fullest sense, Jesus Christ and him crucified. The doctrine of the cross is to the gospel, what the sun is to the solar system; it connects the whole, and sheds light on every part. Take away this doctrine from the system, and nothing is left which can be called a doctrine of salvation; for without the shedding of blood, there is no remission—no salvation for sinners. In the system of doctrines exhibited in this work, an atonement for sin sustains such a place as to be preceded and followed by a number of other doctrines; and it sheds much light on them all; on those which go before, as well as on those which come after it. In the light reflected by Christ's propitiation for the sins of our fallen world, we see more of the glory of the invisible God, (the subject matter of the first Article,) than in every thing else. Here we discover the great design of God in the creation of the world; also the spirituality and importance of the law—the immensely evil nature of sin—the benevolence displayed in vindictive justice, and the pure nature of divine mercy. It is in view of an atonement for sin, that God appears glorious in tendering the offers of life to every child of Adam—also, in exercising his sovereign mercy in renewing the hearts of some of this rebellious race, even such as were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Justification unto life would have no glory, had not the death of Christ laid a foundation for it. Nor can the perseverance or glorification of the saints be disconnected from the doctrine of atonement.

It appears, then, that a minister of the word may adopt the resolution of the apostle, to know nothing among his hearers, *save Jesus Christ and him crucified*; and at the same time imitate his example in not shunning to declare all the counsel of God. That minister of Christ who loves his Master, and those dear immortals for whose redemption he submitted to the death of the cross, will preach nothing which shall have the least tendency to undermine the doctrine of salvation by virtue of that death. Nay, this doctrine will be the focal point, in



which all his preaching, not only on doctrines, but also on experimental and practical subjects, will meet: for he will preach no experimental religion except that which consists in possessing the spirit of Christ, or in receiving of his fullness, grace for grace. Nor will the practical religion he inculcates, consist in anything different from obedience to the precepts of Christ, and a careful imitation of his example. That minister of the word who makes the most unreserved disclosure of the whole system of revealed truth, in all its departments—doctrine, inward feeling, and external practice, will be best prepared to say, “I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.”

There may be some, to whom the charge of souls has been committed, and whose sentiments accord with those which are exhibited in this work, who imagine that prudence dictates to them a virtual concealment of some part of the system. They consider themselves under solemn obligation to preach nothing in *opposition* to any part of the system which they believe; but to preach in favor of every part, they seem not to feel themselves equally obliged. Let me propose a case—a case which has been known to exist: A minister who believes in the discriminating grace of God manifested in personal election, says, “This doctrine is so frequently abused, that I think it had better be passed over in silence.” Some have doubtless thought themselves justified in doing so. But let us see whether this prudence will not naturally lead to results which can by no means be tolerated. Another preacher may say, “Though I believe in a trinity in the Godhead, and in a union of the human and divine natures in the person of the Redeemer; yet these doctrines are so mysterious and difficult of comprehension, that I think it prudent to say nothing about them.” Another may tell us, that he believes in the entire depravity of all unregenerate men, moral as well as immoral, awakened as well as unawakened; but that he finds it so hard to convince moral and seriously disposed men, that they have nothing in them better than supreme love to themselves, and enmity against God, that he thinks it best not to insist on this doctrine. Another may tell us, that he believes in the endless punishment of the wicked; yet, as it appears to be a horrible doctrine to many of his hearers, he can not think it his duty to introduce it into his sermons. Another minister of the word may imagine himself excused from preaching some other doctrine: and another, from preaching some part of experimental, or practical religion. Now I see not how the first of these prudent preachers can convince the others that they have taken wrong ground, until he shall acknowledge that the ground which he himself has taken, is untenable. If he may, in the exercise of what he considers prudence, neglect to preach upon *one* acknowledged truth of revelation, why may not another prudent minister neglect to preach upon *another*? In this case, there would be no inspired umpire to decide which doctrines are to be admitted, and which excluded, from our sermons. “There is no part of Christ’s gospel,” says Henry, “that needs, upon any account, to be concealed; the whole counsel of God must be revealed.” Notes on Matt. x. 27.

If every minister of the word is under obligation to declare all the counsel of God, then is every minister under obligation to be a *student in the scriptures*; else he will not be prepared to declare all his coun-

sel. No minister of Christ has any right to content himself with a superficial knowledge of divine truth. Idleness is a sin which easily besets, and yet illy becomes, a Christian minister; one who is, by his office, a steward of the mysteries of God. If idle, he will not bring out of his treasure things new and old. His preaching will be apt to degenerate into such a sameness, as to be uninteresting to his hearers; not excepting those who love the truth. We are commanded to pray for none to be sent into this work but *laborers*. Matt. ix. 38. The ministers of the word are appointed as pastors or shepherds of Christ's flock; and Christ does not like to have his flock starved. As often as Peter avowed his love to his Master, so often did his Master require him to evince that love, by feeding his sheep. John xxi. 15—17. Pastors after God's own heart, are such as feed his people with *knowledge and understanding*. Jer. iii. 15.

All the friends of truth will doubtless concur in the opinion, that Christ's ministers have no right to deliver unmeaning harangues, in the room of solemn and instructive discourses. And I would ask, whether we do not nearly forfeit our character as Christian *teachers*, when our preaching consists of but little more than mere exhortation? Exhortation has an important place in a minister's work; but to give it weight, he must base it on the great doctrines of the gospel. "Exhort," said Paul to Timothy, "with all long-suffering and *doctrine*." 2 Tim. iv. 2. Were our sermons to consist wholly of exhortations to our hearers to love God, we should not be as likely to accomplish the object, as if we were to spend a part of our time in placing before them the character of that God whom we exhort them to love. Let us first show them what God is, and the obligation they are under to love him, and then we shall have something on which to base our exhortations to them to exercise the love required. Instead of the preacher's spending all his time in exhorting his hearers to submit to God, and to do it immediately, let him make a clear exhibition of the justice of God's claims, and the unreasonableness of the least degree of disaffection to his government; and then a short exhortation will have more effect, than a long and loud one, where the understanding has not been enlightened.

While sinners ought to be pressed with exhortations to repent of sin and believe in Christ, it would be very unprofitable for the preachers of the word to spend all their time in reiterating even such exhortations as these. Let us place before them the most convincing proof of their depravity—of its extent—its voluntary and inexcusable nature—its contrariety to God and his holy law—and its mischievous and ruinous tendency. Let us also show them what a foundation there is for faith in Christ, by means of that infinite sacrifice which he made, to magnify the law, declare God's righteousness, and condemn the sin of rebellious man. And in view of the ill-desert of sin, and the ample provision made for its forgiveness, let us press the obligation to the exercise of repentance and faith. That minister who does not *teach*, as well as *exhort*, can not edify the church; and *he who does not study, can not teach*. If he has been through a collegiate and theological course, unless he still gives himself to the study of divine truth, he can not approve himself to God as a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.

The responsibilities of such a minister in holy things, are not con-

fined to the *matter* which they present to their hearers : their *manner* of preaching, and their daily walk, are of no less consequence. When Paul was parting with his Ephesian brethren, he could appeal to them that he had not only declared to them all the counsel of God, but also that he had not ceased to warn them night and day, with *tears*. This apostle, together with his brethren who concurred with him in what he wrote to the Thessalonians, could say, “Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably, we behaved ourselves among you that believe.”

The ministers of Christ can not discharge the duties of their responsible work, unless they take a deep interest in the spiritual good of their hearers. Their duty is not all of it discharged by merely telling them the truth : they must *beseech* them to be reconciled to God ; yea, to use the language of Christ, they must *compel* them to come to the gospel feast. Nor does preaching the word in public and private, comprise the whole of the work of Christ’s ministers. They are as much bound to *pray* for their hearers, as to *preach* to them : “We will give ourselves,” said the apostles, “continually to *prayer*, and to the ministry of the word.” And let it be remembered, that as Christian ministers are under obligation to have all their sermons agree with inspired truth, they are under no less obligation to see that this is the case with their prayers. Their intercessions, when discordant with the truth, are not only unavailing with God to bring down blessings, but have a pernicious influence on the minds of those in whose hearing they are offered. The Bible is all in favor of God, his holy government, and his unmerited grace ; and in opposition to the rebellion, impenitence, and unbelief of men : and that preaching and praying which does not harmonize with the Bible, does, by no means, become the ministers of Christ. The question should not be, what will render us popular ? but rather, what will meet the approbation of our Master ? They who watch for souls, should have their own minds so deeply imbued with the love of the truth, that it shall be manifested in their sermons and prayers, and in all they say, and do.

X. *Since the religion of the Bible is immutable truth—truth in doctrine, experience, and practice ; the genuineness of our piety must be determined by its agreement with the truth in these several branches.*

We often hear it said, “It will not be inquired of us at the last day, to what denomination we belonged.” There is a sense in which this observation may be correct : but surely, it will not appear a matter of small consequence at that day, whether we were for, or against the truth ; for he that is to be our Judge has said, “Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice.” This declaration fully implies, that every one that is not of the truth, heareth not his voice, and will not, therefore, be acknowledged by him at the last day. In the work that the reader now has before him, no particular denomination (made such by external forms) has been preferred before another : but should those fundamental doctrines on which rests the salvation of lost men, be considered denominational, it is false and dangerous in the extreme to say, that no inquiry will be made concerning our denomination ; since it would imply that divine truth has no influence in rendering our re-



ligion acceptable to God; when, in fact, nothing which is in opposition to it, is in any degree pleasing to him. It is God's own word which informs us, that men fail of salvation because they do not receive the love of the truth; and that they are damned for not believing the truth. 2 Thess. ii. 10, 12.

"Examine yourselves," said Paul to the members of the Corinthian church, "whether ye be in the faith." The obligation imposed on us to examine ourselves, necessarily implies the existence of a *standard* by which the examination is to be conducted. The Bible is that standard by which all our religion must be tried—that balance of the sanctuary in which it must all be weighed. They who are found wanting when weighed in this balance, will be found wanting when they shall stand before the judgment-seat.

To aid the reader in examining into the character of his religion, I shall take the liberty of proposing to him a number of such interrogatories as are suggested by the work before him. Are you fully convinced of the inspiration of the scriptures? Dare you venture your eternal interests on their truth? Do you unhesitatingly believe, that the *doctrines* which they teach, are true and harmonious—that the *inward affections* which they describe as constituting the religion of the heart, are both lovely in themselves, and harmonious with the doctrines—and that the *external duties* which they enjoin, are the natural fruit of sanctified affections? Have you experienced the power of this religion in your own heart? And have you manifested this by corresponding actions?

If the book which is before the reader, be in reality a *Harmony of Divine Truth*, it may afford him help in the work of self-examination. Let him seriously inquire, whether his views and feelings accord with that exhibition of religion which has here been given. Is the system of faith which is exhibited in the First Part of this work, the system which you believe to be contained in the scriptures? Do you believe in the unity, trinity, and infinite perfection, both natural and moral, of Jehovah? Do you believe, that according to his own wise and eternal purpose, he fashioned the universe, and that all its affairs, not excepting the minutest event that transpires, are under his special superintendence and control? Do you believe in the perfection of God's moral government? Is it your full belief that all men are by nature *entirely sinful*?—and have you seen this to be true in application to yourself? Is your faith equally strong in the divinity and humanity of Christ; and are you convinced that his atonement for sin, is the sinner's only ground of hope for pardon? Do you believe that this atonement, with its consequent blessings, is proffered to every individual? Do you also believe that every individual, while in an unrenewed state, is wickedly, yet fully and obstinately opposed to an acceptance of this gracious offer? Is it your belief, that the regenerating change is efficiently caused by the immediate agency of the Holy Ghost, as an act of distinguishing grace; and that it is in accordance with an eternal purpose? Have you seen this scheme of doctrine to be the only one which could have reached the necessities of your own case? Do you also receive, as an article of your faith, the doctrine of a free justification, to the exclusion of all meritorious claims on the part of the justified? And

is this the method of justification which, as an apostate creature, you would prefer to any other that has ever been devised? Do you believe that the union between Christ and his members is indissoluble; so that all those who are once justified, will be eventually glorified? Finally, Do you believe in the resurrection of the body, the general judgment, and the irrevocable sentence of approbation which will then be passed on the righteous, and of condemnation on the wicked?

Let us now extend our self-examination to the experimental part of the system. A belief of the scriptures, and even of the true system of doctrines contained in them, is not peculiar to the children of God; for even devils may believe the truth. See Jam. ii. 19. Let me then ask my reader, whether he has ever become an *experimental Christian*? I am aware that the person who is now addressed, may be one who has altogether a deeper acquaintance with the religion of the heart, than what he can pretend to, who ventures thus to interrogate him. But such a one will not be offended at being interrogated, in common with his fellow men. Nor will he feel that he has ever examined himself so frequently and so thoroughly, as to be excused from all further attention to this duty. Without further apology, therefore, I again ask my reader, whether he has ever become a *new man*—ever been transformed by the renewing of his mind? In case you have had a change in relation to the subject of religion, it behooves you to inquire, whether it be that change which is effected by the power of the Holy Ghost. Have you been born of incorruptible seed, even the word of God that liveth and abideth forever? Are your religious affections holy, and in harmony with the truth contained in the scriptures?

Have you become fully convinced, that those religious experiences which are of a selfish nature, are no evidence of a saving change? As it respects your own experiences, can you clearly perceive that the idol, *self*, has been put down, and that your heart has been expanded with that disinterested love that seeketh not her own? Does your love of *good-will* extend to all intelligent beings, and your *complacency* to all such as have a holy character? Do you delight in God on account of his holiness; and in the children of God because they bear his holy image? Have you become *cordially reconciled* to that divine government, with which you once were at war; and do you exercise submission to the will of God under those evils which you suffer in this life? Are your feelings towards sin entirely changed? Does it render you in your own sight altogether vile and ill-deserving? Is your *repentance* for sin accompanied with *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ; and is the atonement which he has made for sin, your whole dependence for acceptance with God? Does your *hope* of heaven purify you; and does it prove an anchor to your soul? Do you esteem *humility* as a precious grace; and is it promoted in you by a conviction of your absolute dependence on God, and extreme vileness in his sight? Do you know, by your own experience, what is intended by a *hunger* and *thirst* for righteousness—also, what is meant by *forgiving from the heart*, such as have injured you? Is *self-denial* an article in your experience? for if it is not, you may know that all your other experiences are fallacious. See Mark viii. 34. Do you exercise towards God a spirit of *thankfulness*; and is it of a character superior

to that which the unregenerate exercise towards their benefactors? "Sinners love those who love them." Are you experienced in *holy meditation*? Do thoughts of God and divine things dwell on your mind, and afford you more satisfaction than all other subjects?

It may now be proper for you to inquire, whether your experimental religion has remained with you ever since you commenced your religious course. Have you *continued* to exercise good-will to all, and complacency towards holy characters? Have you continued to exercise submission to the divine will, repentance for sin, faith in Christ, hope of eternal life, a humble spirit, a hunger and thirst after righteousness, a spirit of forgiveness, self-denial, thankfulness, and holy meditation; together with other kindred affections and devout breathings after God? The water which Christ gives to every convert, we are assured, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. It may therefore be known, that in every case where it has dried up, it was not in truth the water of life. If your experimental religion does not *continue* unto the end of life, this circumstance proves it to be spurious. Nay, if it does not *increase*, it does not answer to the scriptural account of true grace; which is compared to leaven hid in meal, that continues to diffuse its influence, until it has leavened the whole lump.

Let the examination concerning the character of our religion, now be extended to the *practical* part. We must *walk* in the truth, as well as *believe* and *love* the truth. It is a question of great moment, in determining our spiritual state, What is our *practice*—our *external* conduct? Is this in conformity to the truth of the gospel? "Ye are my friends," said Christ, "if ye *do* whatsoever I command you." If our religious experiences die in our hearts, and never influence our external conduct, there is no reason to conclude that they are the fruits of the Spirit. Suffer me, then, to make the following inquiries. Do you have respect to all the divine commands; namely, those which relate to God, to your fellow men, and to yourself? Do you have respect to those which relate to *God*? Do you attend to all the duties of godliness? Do you *worship* God, praying with all the kinds of prayer that belong to one sustaining your place and relations in society? Do you greatly prize this duty, as the means of glorifying and enjoying God, improving your own character, and obtaining blessings for yourself, your friends, and fellow men? Are you attentive to the *word* of God, both in *reading* it and *hearing* it preached? Do you conscientiously *keep holy the Sabbath* during all parts of the year, not excepting earing time and harvest; and do you call the Sabbath a delight? Have you *confessed Christ before men*; and are you walking in fellowship with his people? Or if you have not made an open profession of religion, are you willing and desirous to do it, provided God can be honored by it? Do you *consecrate a suitable proportion of your earthly substance* to Him who is the Supreme Owner of all that you possess; and do you do it cheerfully, feeling it to be a most reasonable service?

Are you conscientious in that part of holy practice which relates to your *fellow men*? As to those duties which you owe to community at large, do you feel yourself under obligation to perform them? Do you discharge those duties which are designed to promote the good of



your neighbor, as his *person, property, and reputation* are concerned? Let me further inquire, (for nothing else is of such consequence,) do you care for the *souls* of your fellow men? And are you making an effort, by affording them instruction, the light of your example, and the benefit of your prayers, to save them from sin and ruin?

Do the duties of *relative* life have a place in your practical system? Whatever may be the relations you sustain, do you inquire after the duties which are connected with them; and do you perform these duties? And are you willing that these relations should lay you under such obligations? Whatever place you may sustain in the domestic circle, whether it be that of husband or wife, parent or child, brother or sister, master or servant; do you study to discharge, in the fear of God, the duties of that place?

It behooves you also to inquire, whether you are attentive to the duties which you owe to *yourself*. Do you live soberly, avoiding all dissipating amusements, and watching against idle words and unprofitable discourse? Are you conscientiously diligent in the improvement of your time, knowing that you must give an account for every moment of it? In meats and drinks, do you submit to the laws of strict temperance? Is your conversation chaste, coupled with fear? Do you aim in every thing to keep your body under, and bring it into subjection to the precepts of the gospel; and do you keep yourself unspotted from the world?

Unless we are conformed to the truth in doctrine, experience, and practice—unless we believe, feel, and act in accordance with it, we are without any scriptural evidence that we have become savingly acquainted with it. The absolute necessity of the middle branch, namely, *experimental* religion, is asserted by our divine Teacher, in his address to Nicodemus: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God.” Nothing short of that radical change of heart, which is the beginning of experimental religion, will avail anything: “For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a *new creature*.” Gal. vi. 15. The grace of God in the heart, which is nothing else than the truth of the gospel experimentally known, is that part of religion which gives life to all the other parts. If this be wanting, no orthodox creed, or regularity of external deportment, ought to make us feel in the least degree safe. And if our experimental religion lack a single grace of the Spirit, such as repentance, faith, submission, and the like, there can be no satisfactory evidence that we are subjects of the regenerating change.

Nor can we have a scriptural reason to conclude that we are born of the Spirit, unless we are led to *believe* the truth: for when we are said to be chosen to salvation, *through sanctification of the Spirit*, it is immediately added, *and belief of the truth*. 2 Thess. ii. 13. The scriptures assume the ground, that the sanctification of the Spirit will secure its subjects, not only against infidelity, or a denial of revealed religion; but also against their rejecting any of its fundamental doctrines, and the adoption of destructive errors in their room. It appears to have been the manifest design of the apostle John, in his first and second epistles, to establish the doctrine, that Christ is, in the truest

sense, both God and man : and he expressed the fullest confidence, that no *experimental* believers in the gospel could be prevailed upon by heretical teachers to renounce this doctrine. "These things," said he, "have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you." He then adds, as a matter of great consolation, "But the anointing which ye have received of him," (i. e. the sanctifying work of the Spirit in your hearts,) "abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you : but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie : and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." 1 John, ii. 26, 27. From the text now cited we learn, that the relinquishment of one of those fundamental truths, which this holy anointing has a tendency to lead us to discover, and to feel the absolute need of, in order to our own salvation, ought to be considered as a symptom of an unregenerate state.

As a real unction of the Holy One, has a tendency to establish our minds in the belief of divine truth, so it will most certainly issue in rendering us obedient to the will of God in our external conduct : for "if we say we have fellowship with him," (i. e. by the power of inward religion,) "and walk in darkness," (have our outward walk sinful and disobedient,) "we lie, and do not the truth." An entire deficiency in *practical* religion, is decisive evidence of unregeneracy. And if we are defective in either of the great branches of holy practice, namely, the duties we owe to God, to our fellow men, or to ourselves, it will prove us perverse. Moreover, if our obedience does not extend to all the parts of holy practice—if we have not respect to all the commands of God ; it must weaken the evidence of our godly sincerity. Believers, it is true, are all sinfully imperfect as to the degree of their obedience : but unless our obedience be pure in its nature, and perfect in its parts, it is no proper evidence of the faith of God's elect—it is no evidence that we are pressing to the mark of perfection.

The question is often asked, What is the best evidence of grace? I would say, The best evidence is to have *all the evidences*, and to have them in their due proportion : to be sound in the faith—to be deeply acquainted with the graces of the Spirit—and, in our external conduct, to have respect unto all God's commandments. These, when united, constitute the best evidence that one's religion is from God, and that it will meet his approbation in the future world.

Let me now entreat the reader not to lay down this book, without solemnly resolving that he will try all his religious sentiments, feelings, and practices, by the word of truth : (for I have not a single desire that he should make any use of the book which is before him, except for the purpose of leading him to form a better acquaintance with the book of God.) Though I have attempted to assist him in examining into the character of his religion, I would now, with deep solicitude for his eternal welfare, inform him, that no assistance which I or any other man can afford him, will preclude the necessity of his personal attention to this important concern. You must be sensible that your experimental religion (the very thing which gives character to the whole) is concealed from every mortal besides yourself : "for what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?" Hence it is indispensable, whatever helps are afforded, that every man

should prove his own work. See Gal. vi. 4. "Never did you undertake a work, where there was so much danger of your doing it slightly, and where the consequences of slighting the work were likely to prove so fatal. May you be enabled to attend to it with thoroughness, and come to a correct decision. And surely, if you have a proper sense of the difficulty of the work before you, and the great importance of its being done effectually, you can not fail to seek His help, who has an intuitive knowledge of the character of every man. You will say with David, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

XI. *Since the gospel, in distinction from every other system of religion, is founded in truth, they who have been made acquainted with it, must be under obligation to make it known to the rest of the world.*

Let the supposition be made, that God, in his providence, should have mercifully brought to our knowledge a catholicon, having sufficient efficacy to remove all the bodily diseases of the human family; how manifestly would this peculiar favor impose an obligation upon us to make it known to them all. And how much greater would be our obligation to do it, in case this universal remedy with which we had been made acquainted, had relation to the diseases of the *soul*. Such a remedy for spiritual maladies, we are furnished with in the gospel of Christ. "It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." "It cleanseth from all sin." In every case where this divine remedy is tried, it proves effectual to restore the soul to health and comfort.

They who have any consistent belief of the gospel, believe it to be not only true, but the only system of religion on earth which is founded in truth; or which has any tendency to bring glory to God, and salvation to lost man. "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." The obligation that Christian nations are under, to communicate their religion to their brethren of the human race, arises wholly from this circumstance; that theirs is *the only true religion in the world*. This it certainly claims to be, when it declares concerning Christ, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." It is also said, *Where there is no vision, (by which is meant the light of revealed truth,) the people perish.*

The rest of mankind may imagine that their respective religious systems are right; yea, they may believe them to be exclusively so: but the light of God's word is sufficient to discover the error and foolishness of all their pretensions. Pagan idolatry prevails to a greater extent than any other religion in the world; but it is manifestly false. We do not merely believe—we *know* that "the stock is a doctrine of vanities," and that the worshiper of idols "feedeth on ashes." This he himself will acknowledge, as soon as he shall be awaked out of his dream. The religion of the Arabian prophet claims to be the only one which is from heaven: but what are the proofs by which its claims are supported? It is not supported by miraculous works, nor by prophecies fulfilled, nor by the purity and harmony of its sacred writings.



Christians, after having compared the Koran with the Bible, and examined the proofs by which their respective claims are supported, believe and are *sure* that the Bible, in distinction from the Koran, is the word of God.

With such an assured belief of the Christian religion, to the exclusion of all others, what is our duty? Will not love to our fellow men prompt us to make them acquainted with it? There is nothing else we possess that they so much need, as our religion. Without a knowledge of this they can not be saved. Even if it had not been explicitly enjoined on us to spread the gospel, still, one would suppose that the benevolent spirit which it imparts to such as embrace it, would of itself prompt us to the duty. But it is most expressly enjoined. The Author and Finisher of our Faith required his apostles to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature—to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. They received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations. See Mark xvi. 15. Acts i. 8. Rom. i. 5. The religion of Christ does not more explicitly require parents to provide for the wants of their children, or debtors to pay their debts, than it requires those who are favored with the knowledge of this religion, to communicate it to such as are destitute of it. This duty will not be fully discharged by us, until the gospel shall be preached in all the world, and all nations shall be brought into the church of Christ. There is no place for us to stop, until he shall reign from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth; until the swords shall be beaten into plough-shares, and the spears into pruning-hooks, and nations shall not learn war any more.

Do you ask, what is to be done to make known to all people the religion of the Son of God—the only religion which brings salvation to a fallen world? I answer, Many things are to be done. Some must go in person to preach the word, and in other ways to impart instruction to the unevangelized nations. Some parents, like the mother of Samuel, must consent to lend their sons to the Lord, (and their daughters too,) to be employed in this self-denying service as long as they live. All must unite, the poor as well as the rich, in making such offerings to the Lord's treasury as this great and holy enterprise shall require. All who love Zion, must be engaged in offering up strong cries to Him who is able to open the eyes of the blind, and to turn men from the power of Satan unto God. The monthly prayer-meeting must unite the hearts of all the godly in every communion; and during all the month, there must be much prayer for a divine blessing on those extraordinary means which are now in operation, and such as may hereafter be put in operation, for the spread of the gospel through the earth.

If it is our duty to propagate the gospel, because it is the only *true religion*, it will follow as a consequence, that we are bound to see to it, that the gospel we propagate among the unevangelized nations, is the same which has been delivered to us in the holy scriptures. We are under the most solemn obligation to do our utmost, to have those translations of God's word which we make for their use, convey in their languages the sense of the originals. The religious books which

we send them, or write for them, ought to be such as agree with the oracles of God. The ministers, catechists, and school-teachers, which we send among them, should be such as understand, believe, and obey the truth—such as will translate, preach, pray, instruct, and live, according to the will of God, as it is made known in “the scripture of truth.” It would be conferring no favor on the heathen, to send them the teachers and doctrines of the papal church; a church which, in the sure word of prophecy, is denominated “the mother of harlots.” And even among the reformed nations, doctrines may be found, and teachers to advocate them, that are no less subversive of gospel truth, and ruinous to the souls of men. Nothing but the light of truth, even the truth of God’s holy word, is calculated to dispel the darkness which covers the earth, and the gross darkness which envelops the pagan world.

Some may think the ground which has been taken, namely, that it is our duty to propagate Christianity because it is the true religion, will render it the duty of Mahometans and Pagans to propagate their systems; which they also believe to be true. It can not, however, be the duty of Mahometans and Pagans to propagate their respective systems of religion, since it is not their duty even to *believe* them. They believe them (as all the disciples of Christ must know) without evidence; for there can certainly be no evidence to establish the truth of that which is not true. If they had a heart to do the will of God, they could not believe their schemes of religion to be true; but would immediately perceive them to be destitute of that moral excellence which is essential to true religion. Paul once thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth; but it was never his duty to feel and act as he did. Therefore, as soon as he possessed an obedient heart, he immediately ceased from persecuting the Church, and began to preach the faith which he once destroyed. The argument by which we urge the belief of Christianity upon Pagan and Mahometan nations, is not this; that *we believe it ourselves*. Were this our argument, they might have one of equal force with which to turn upon us, and seek to convert us to the religious systems in which they have been educated. We urge on them the belief of the Christian religion, because *it is true*; and we stand ready to furnish them with the proofs of its truth. By the light of revelation, we are made acquainted with the arguments (which, had we not fallen into a state of depravity, might have been discovered by the mere light of nature,) in favor of the existence, infinite perfection, universal providence, and moral government of the one living and true God. We can therefore show our erring brethren, that to them and to us there is a common Creator and Judge; and that we are all manifestly involved in a state of depravity and guilt. We can show them that an explicit revelation of the will of our Creator, in relation to his claims, and our obligations, and also our prospects for futurity, is greatly needed. We can inform them that we have in our hands a book, which claims to be such a revelation; and can show them that it is accompanied with such a variety of infallible proofs, as to amount to a demonstration of its divine origin—and that a satisfactory number of these proofs are within the reach of every one who candidly examines the book itself. We can

show them that this sacred book exhibits to our guilty race a "common salvation;" a salvation which all need, and of which all may partake who will receive and trust in it. As soon as they admit the claims of the Bible, they will see that our common Parent has imposed an obligation on those into whose hands it should fall, to circulate it among their brethren of the human race, from the rising to the setting of the sun.

It may still be said by some, who are slow of heart to believe that it belongs to an inconsiderable minority of mankind, to attempt the conversion of all the rest: "If you undertake to convert papists to the protestant faith, they will return your good offices—if you undertake to convert heretics to orthodoxy, they will feel themselves justified in taking equal pains to bring the orthodox over to their sentiments—and if Christians engage in missions with a view to the conversion of Pagan and Mahometan nations, they will take the liberty to send their missionaries into Christendom, for the purpose of bringing us to adopt their religious opinions. If, therefore, Christians have the truth in distinction from Pagans and Mahometans—if protestants have it in distinction from papists—and if they who are called the orthodox, have it in distinction from those denominated heretics, still, the truth will be likely to gain nothing by claiming the exclusive right to proselyte all the different religious opinions to itself.

To this specious objection to missionary operations, and all other efforts to bring the whole world over to the side of the truth, I would briefly reply:

First. The *truth*, in religion as well as in every thing else, has all the sound arguments in its favor, and therefore does not shrink back from the most thorough investigation: neither can it suffer anything by being brought into contact with every false system which has ever been invented. If Jehovah is the only true God, all the sound arguments must be in favor of *his* existence and *his* claims; and there can not be a single good argument advanced in favor of the divinity of Baal, Juggernaut, or any of those idols for whom divine honors have been claimed. If the Bible is, in distinction from all others, *the book* which God has given to make known his will to the children of men, then it is the only book which can be proved to be a divine revelation. It will therefore follow as a necessary consequence, that all the arguments which are adduced to support the inspiration of the Koran, or any other book claiming to be a revelation from God, must be altogether fallacious. Moreover, the true scheme of doctrine which is contained in the Bible, whatever that may be, must be the only one which is capable of being defended by sound and scriptural arguments.

Secondly. Another consideration which impels us to make unwearied efforts to propagate the gospel, and to seek to persuade all men to take the side of the truth, is the *necessity* of this measure in order to prevent their everlasting ruin. To be saved, men must come to the knowledge of the truth; and to be made free from the bondage of sin, they must know the truth. See 1 Tim. ii. 4. John viii. 32. The ministers of Christ can not discharge their office with fidelity to their Master; nor can they commend themselves to the consciences



of their hearers, except by a clear manifestation of the truth. See 2 Cor. iv. 1, 2. As far as they have opportunity to make this manifestation, they can not avoid doing it without incurring great guilt.

Thirdly. We wish it to be remembered, that in propagating the gospel, or that "form of sound words" which constitutes its life and glory, the friends of truth claim not the sword of the false prophet, nor the inquisition of a false church, to aid their conquests. They use no weapons, except such as are spiritual, to defend or enforce the truth. In such a warfare, no violence is done to any man's person, property, reason, or conscience. The friends of truth are not ashamed to avow it to be their design to conquer the world; but they seek for nothing but *willing* captives. Those of their enemies whom they cannot in this manner subdue, they refer to the final decision of Him who came into the world to bear witness of the truth. From his decision there will be no appeal.

Fourthly. The thing which emboldens the friends of truth, though a small minority, to seek to bring the great majority over to their views on the interesting subject of religion, is their full persuasion that God himself is on their side; and that what they are doing to effect a revolution in the religious opinions and practices of the world, by bringing all men to believe the scriptures, and to adopt that consistent and harmonious system of truth which they contain, is done in obedience to his command. They hope in his mercy; they trust in the promises he has made concerning the ultimate conquest which the truth will gain over every false way. They make great dependence on a secret, but mighty influence, which he exerts exclusively in favor of the truth, and in harmony with their efforts. See 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. This influence they have felt themselves, and this they ask in behalf of their fellow sinners, for whose salvation they pray and labor. This gracious influence they consider as the cause of that "*love of the truth*," which constitutes the radical difference between them and other men. They wish all their opposers to know, that their dependence for success is on the God of truth, and that they expect His help in answer to their prayers. Nor are they unwilling that *they* should take the same method to obtain help. The prophet Elijah, when confronting the worshipers of Baal on mount Carmel, was not afraid of the influence of their *prayers*: for he well knew that there was but one God who could hear prayer; and he knew that Jehovah was that God. When prayer is made to the true God, if it be made in opposition to the truth, it will avail nothing. In prayer, "we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth."

But I need not enlarge on an article of duty which is so plain. Let, therefore, the friends of divine truth, whoever they are, (and God knows them all by their names,) go forward in their conflict with error, whether it exist in their own hearts, or in the world around them; and let them go in the strength of the Lord God. So far as they are engaged for the truth, the entire word of God is in their favor—the promises are theirs—the availing prayers of the whole church are on their side—the providence of God is secretly working for them—and the special operations of the Spirit of truth are affording the mpowerful aid. Though now they are like "a handful of corn in the earth, upon

the top of the mountains ;” yet the prediction is sure, “the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon.” Truth will not only spring up in the earth, but prevail ; even to the eradication of every one of those poisonous plants which our heavenly Father has not planted. There will, we trust, but a few more generations pass away, before that will be verified which is spoken by the prophet : “A *little* one shall become a *thousand*, and a *small* one a *strong* nation.” May the Lord hasten it in his time !

XII. *Since the religion of Christ is truth—pure, harmonious, heavenly truth ; it is the imperious and solemn duty of every child of Adam to whom it is made known, immediately to embrace it, and be conformed to it in doctrine, experience, and practice.*

Every man who has opportunity to become acquainted with the Bible, is under obligation to believe it ; not because it is believed by his neighbors, or his nation ; but because “it is in truth the word of God ;” and because it carries its proof along with it. “And if I say the truth,” said Christ, “why do ye not believe me ?” Truth claims belief. It is the *truth* of the gospel religion which induces the obligation to believe it. A system of philosophy may be true, and still it be no sin to disbelieve it : but the truths of the Bible are of such a nature, that it is not possible for us to disbelieve them, without incurring guilt. As well might children plead innocency in turning away their ears from the counsels and commands of their parents, as intelligent creatures pretend they are not under obligation to hear the voice of God. The Bible is the voice of God, addressed directly to the children of men, stating His claims, and their duty. A spirit of obedience in children, prepares them to hear what is addressed to them by their parents ; and a spirit of obedience in creatures, will prepare them to hear what shall be spoken to them by Him who made them. With such a spirit, it is not possible that the scriptures should be disbelieved by those to whom they are made known. As soon might a man, with his eyes open at noon day, doubt the light of the sun. This position is supported by those words of the Savior : “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.” John vii. 17. According to this declaration, nothing more is needed than a humble, docile spirit, to dispel all the infidelity there is in Christendom. And what man will pretend to say, that he is not under obligation to possess and cultivate such a spirit.

Nor is the whole of our duty complied with, by an acknowledgment of the divine authority of the sacred writings, while we remain indifferent concerning the scheme of doctrine which we shall adopt. We are under as much obligation to believe *the very truth* which these writings contain, as we are to believe the writings themselves to be true. If they are given by inspiration, they must contain but one system of doctrines ; and since the true system is the only one in favor of which they utter a syllable, this is the one, in distinction from all others, which we are bound to embrace. This system, whatever it may be, is distinguished from all which are false, not only by having the scripture wholly on its side ; but it is, in reality, the only scheme of doctrine which can be made to agree with facts ; that is, with the true

state of the moral world. It is easy, therefore, by the help of incontrovertible facts, together with plain and harmonious declarations of the inspired word, to ascertain what is truth. It is represented to be so easy, that the most ignorant man is under no necessity of wandering from the path of life: "The way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein." Isa. xxxv. 8. Let them have a sincere wish to find the way of holiness, and they can not mistake it. And it should not be forgotten, that all who in a right manner inquire the way to Zion, inquire with their faces thitherward. Jer. l. 5. Whatever excuses there may be for the ignorance of the head, there can be none for the perverseness of the heart.

The word of God describes a system of experimental religion which entirely harmonizes with its holy doctrines. Those inward affections which constitute the experimental part of religion, are so proper and so lovely, that every man is bound to prefer them to their counterfeits, which must be altogether of a selfish character, and founded in error. Every one is under obligation to possess such affections, because they are right—they are in perfect conformity to the truth: and that person who does not possess them, is in reality an enemy to the truth, and to the interests of the great universe.

The works which constitute the practical part of the religion of Christ, may well be called "*good works*." They are based on eternal truth, and are therefore obligatory on every man. The precepts of the decalogue, both of the first and second table, commend themselves to every man's conscience as being right. And the two brief commands which are a summary of both tables, (and indeed of all the law and the prophets,) are manifestly such as ought to regulate the conduct of all the children of Adam.

No man who is not a sceptic, can question either the universal claims, or the applicability, of the religion of Christ. Though he was a Jew, he did not die for that nation only; but that he might gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad through the earth. His religion is as much adapted, and as much designed for one nation as for another. In this sense he is "the Savior of all men." His throne was first set up on the hill of Zion; but with the express intention of extending his dominion to the uttermost parts of the earth. See Ps. ii. 6—8. There is nothing of a local nature in the religion of the gospel. The God whose character it delineates, and whose claims it asserts, is the Being who made of one blood all nations to dwell on the face of the whole earth; and the propitiatory sacrifice which it exhibits, was made for the sins of the whole world. Its sacred writings describe the character, wants, and duties of men of all nations; and they need only to be translated into all languages, to be immediately adapted for universal use. The religion of Christ is not only true, but it is the only true religion on earth. It is the only religion which makes a true display of the character of Jehovah, who is the Most High over all the earth; and which exhibits a consistent plan of reconciliation between Him and the children of men. This religion, therefore, claims the attention and the cordial reception of the whole human race. This is required by Him who is not only the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but "the God of the spirits



of all flesh." By a voice from heaven he says, "This is my beloved Son, hear him." And the Son himself thus addresses the whole fallen race: "Unto you, O *men*, do I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." And again: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." He would not have required this attention of mankind, and this subjection to his yoke, if his religion had not been what they all needed. Nor would he have required this universal attention and subjection, had he not brought ample testimonials of a divine commission. To the Jews he said, "If I bear witness of myself," (that is, if my own declaration were all I had to establish my claims,) "my witness is not true." Those who truly believe in the religion of the gospel, are fully convinced that its external and internal evidences are sufficient to prove its divine origin. They are as fully persuaded that the religion of the scriptures has God for its author, and that, when cordially embraced, it will prepare men to meet his approbation, as they are that he has established a moral government over rational creatures.

If the gospel is from heaven, the rejection of it must be, as the scriptures represent it, a very heinous sin. See John xv. 22, and xvi. 9. That my reader, if not a Christian, should be convinced of the sin of unbelief, and feel the weight of obligation resting on him to become a disciple of Christ, is a matter of no small consequence. He is now drawing near the close of a book, the object of which was, to recommend to him the religion of the gospel—to recommend it, not to his curious attention, but to his *acceptance*; as being the only system of faith which can make him either holy or happy. If he has proceeded thus far, without yielding the consent of his heart to the religion of the Savior, let me entreat him to pause, and consider the great and immediate obligation he is under to yield this consent. Let him remember, that if this volume has placed the real gospel of Christ before him, the perusal of it will do him no good, unless the truth be received in the love of it. To receive it in this manner, is what I would now earnestly and affectionately urge upon him. While some of those around you have received the overtures of mercy, and laid down the weapons of their rebellion, you, my unbelieving reader, are still in arms against the government of the Most High. While they approve of the plan of reconciliation through the mediation of God's beloved Son, you are either treating it with entire neglect, or you are attempting to effect a reconciliation by the deeds of the law. It is obviously your duty, in case you are now in unbelief, to become a believer. If it is right that God should reign, then every rebellious creature in the universe ought to approve of that system of religion which vindicates his right. Since the gospel is the only scheme of religion that provides a way in which God can pardon sin, consistently with the honor of his law and the interests of the universe, every one is solemnly bound to prefer this to all the self-righteous schemes which men have ever devised.

The demand which the gospel makes on mankind, to exercise repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, can not be resisted by any man without incurring great guilt. The demand is most reasonable. Reason, as well as scripture, says, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world and they that dwell

therein." Reason says that it belongs to Him who made all things, to rule over the creatures he has made ; and that it is incumbent upon them, in case they have revolted, to condemn their revolt and return to allegiance. Reason also declares, that when the Supreme Ruler has provided a way to extend pardon to rebellious creatures, in consistency with the stability of that law which is the basis of his government, they ought themselves to fall in with it, and prefer it to any other way. The salvation proposed to us in the gospel, is in such manifest accordance with the great principles of a perfect moral government ; it is so gracious and so holy ; and at the same time so easy of access to the most sinful and wretched of the race ; that no man who has heard it explained, and been once invited to partake of its proffered blessings, can have any *excuse* for not embracing it immediately, without even waiting for the invitation to be repeated. But excuses for neglecting to do it, are by no means uncommon. The gospel invitation is the very thing that is alluded to, when it is said, "All, with one consent, began to make excuse."

When men are pressed with their obligation to yield, without delay, to the claims which the gospel makes upon them, one is heard to say, "There are so many creeds, or sorts of belief, among Christians, that I can not tell which to embrace." To this I would reply, there is but one creed, one system of faith in the holy scriptures. In them, but one God is described as the living and true God—his law is always presented to our view as the same holy thing—man's fallen nature is uniformly represented as entirely depraved—but one sacrifice for sin is exhibited, and but one way of becoming interested in it. The same may be said concerning every other article of faith ; it has the whole scripture testimony in its favor. There is but one system of doctrines taught in the word of God ; and this is the only one which is in harmony with existing facts. Surely, no blame can attach to the word of God, because men have wrested it, and wearied themselves to make it speak a language foreign to its true meaning. These contradictory schemes are not chargeable on the inspired volume, but are to be imputed to our native aversion to divine truth.

Another will say, "I can not become a Christian, because of the wickedness I see among Christian professors." We who name the name of Christ, stand greatly reprov'd for having given so much occasion for this objection. If we have any godly sincerity, we shall be greatly grieved that we have thrown such an obstacle in the way of the conversion of our fellow men ; since we are assured, that except they shall become converted, their admission into the kingdom of heaven will be utterly impossible. As there is no reason to expect that this obstacle will be wholly removed, while the present generation is on the stage, we wish to convince the unregenerate, that though an obstacle, it constitutes no excuse whatever for their remaining impenitent. Though this is one of the most formidable of the objections, which the unregenerate make against embracing the religion of the gospel, yet we are persuaded they are not only unwise, but wholly inexcusable, in suffering it thus to influence their conduct in an affair of such immense consequence. This they may see themselves, if they will but attend to the following considerations :

First. There is not the least defect in the character of Jesus Christ, the founder of this religion : and let it be remembered, that He alone is exhibited to us as our perfect pattern. Even the chief of the apostles required others to follow him, only as he followed Christ. 1 Cor. xi. 1.

Secondly. There is no imperfection either in the doctrines or precepts of Christ. These are worthy of their Author. They are like silver seven times purified. These doctrines and precepts, and not the imperfect examples of its professors, constitute that gospel which men are required to embrace.

Thirdly. Numerous disciples of Christ, both in Bible days, and in all succeeding ages, have shone as lights in a dark world. Though they have not, like their Master, been altogether without spot, yet their character has been manifestly improved by their religion.

Fourthly. Why should the conduct of those professors of Christianity who are, in the scriptures, stigmatized as “ the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things ”—present such an obstacle in the way of any one’s becoming a follower of the Lamb ? Their conduct furnishes no solid objection against the excellency of His religion whom they call Lord, Lord ; but whose disciples they never were. The scriptures have forewarned us, that such members would intrude into the church of Christ, and even into the holy ministry. But why should the wheat be considered as worthless, because an enemy has sown tares in the same field ? At the harvest, we are assured that a separation will be made, when the wheat will be gathered in, and the tares will be burned. They to whom gospel invitations are presented, can not suppose that Christ invites them to become *hypocritical* professors of his religion ; nor that he requires them to take complacency in those who are of this character. This very objection, which unbelievers so often urge against becoming Christians, serves, among other things, to show that they are without excuse in refusing to do it. In condemning the hypocritical members of the church, and in making their unchristian lives an apology for unbelief, they do, in effect, declare themselves to be under obligation to become its sincere and upright members. The language of their objection is, “ If the followers of Christ would but live up to their profession, it would impose an obligation on *us* to become his followers.” This implies a present conviction in their minds, that Christianity is in itself a very holy religion. Why, then, are they not under obligation to become such, as they are convinced that all the professors of Christianity ought to be ? Why do they not embrace this holy religion, and so exemplify it, as to give the world a better illustration of its purity in the unsullied lives of its professors ?

Another may say, “ Neither of the objections which have been suggested, is my excuse for not becoming a Christian. I know what the doctrines and precepts of the gospel are, and what must be done that I may be saved. I am convinced that it is no apology for my unbelief, that many of those who profess to know Christ, belie their profession. But my excuse is this ; that I am *unable* to receive Christ for my Savior, until he shall be revealed in my heart by the Holy Ghost.” It is



affecting to the ministers of Christ, that so many of those dear immortals for whose reconciliation they are anxious, urge this as a justifiable excuse for neglecting the great salvation. What shall they say to such neglecters of the gospel? Shall they deny the necessity of divine influence to effect their reconciliation? This they can not do, in consistency with the word of truth; nor without contradicting what they, and all other Christians, have learned by their own experience. But still, as honest men, they can say to the impenitent, You are wrong in considering this dependence on God for a change of character, as a justification for your impenitence and stupid inattention to the concerns of your souls; and if you will listen to us a few moments, without prejudice, we hope to be able to convince you of it. Let the following things be duly considered:

1st. You can not but know that God requires you to become Christians; not in name only, but in heart. He requires the very things which you say you have a good excuse for not doing; such as making a new heart, repenting of sin, believing in Christ, &c. As believers in the inspiration of the scriptures, you dare not say that these requirements are wrong and unreasonable. You can not suppose that God would require you to do that, for the neglect of which you have a good excuse. Nor can you imagine that his knowledge of the subject is less perfect than your own.

2d. You can not but know, that the scriptures do not represent your dependence on the Spirit's influence for a renovation of nature, to be the dependence of *weakness*, but of *wickedness*. It was after Christ had told sinners that they *would not* come to him for life, that he taught them the need of his Father's drawing, to enable them to come. Is it not perverse for you to plead, as an excuse for the neglect of the great salvation, that so great is your opposition to its humbling and holy terms, that you can never be willing to embrace it, unless that willingness shall be the result of a divine power great enough to overcome this opposition?

3d. Is it not, dear friends, a strong circumstance against the validity of your excuse, that it is always abandoned by the subjects of the new birth? Though the convert still believes that he needed special divine influence to transform his wicked heart, he is now completely convinced, that his former neglect of the great salvation was criminal and inexcusable. Is it reasonable to believe, that all those who have their hearts purified by obeying the truth, should by this very means be led to relinquish the excuse in question, had it been founded in truth? The force of our present argument is this: If converted sinners are right in feeling that their *former* impenitence and unbelief were, while they remained, inexcusable, then unconverted sinners ought to feel that their *present* impenitence and unbelief are without excuse.

4th. It is of great importance that you understand, that God's gift of the Spirit, to effect a transformation in men's hearts, is bestowed in quite a different manner from most of his other gifts. What is done *for* us, is done *within* us; and in such a way as to be perceived only by our own activity. Although operated upon by the Spirit of God, it is ourselves who repent, believe, love, and exercise all other holy af-

fections. The Spirit's influence does not, therefore, preclude the necessity of a personal attention to our duty ; particularly in relation to our own salvation. And though the very commencement of this attention should be acknowledged as the effect of divine influence ; yet we are conscious of nothing but the reflections of our own minds. We now become convinced, that the long neglected and vastly important subject of religion, demands our immediate attention.

5th. As the ministers of reconciliation, we would seek not only to disarm our fellow men of this excuse, but to convert it into a powerful argument by which to urge upon them an immediate attention to the one thing needful. We appeal to the individuals who raise the objection we are now attempting to meet, whether it be rational to believe, that God has informed sinners of their dependence on his Spirit, for the purpose of releasing them from a personal attention to their salvation. Is it not much more consonant to reason to believe, that he has done it to encourage their attention ? God would have them know that it is their duty to accept the offer of salvation, whether it be accompanied with the Spirit's influence or not. But he would also have them know that their hearts, unaided by his Spirit, are too wicked to be depended upon for an acceptance of that gracious offer. He acquaints them with their need of the Spirit's aid, for the two-fold purpose of discouraging their dependence on self-sufficient efforts ; and of encouraging them, notwithstanding their entire moral impotency, still to make efforts. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Does it stimulate saints to strive to work out their own salvation, to know that there is a Holy Ghost, who can work in them both to will and to do ; and why should sinners convert this precious truth into an opiate, to lull them to sleep ? We beseech them to do it no longer. We pray them in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God.

Time would fail me, were I to notice all the excuses which the impenitent make for rejecting the gospel invitation. To readers of this character I would say, in a word ; You may know that your omniscient and righteous Judge will expose the speciousness of all your excuses, so that they will avail you nothing when you stand before his bar. To propose them to your teachers, with a view to have them obviated, may be well ; but to search for excuses to justify your impenitence and unbelief, is wicked and foolish in the extreme. This is one of the most common and aggravated ways of resisting the HOLY GHOST. It is building strong holds to prevent being conquered by the Captain of salvation—it is striving, not to enter in at the strait gate, but to keep on in the broad way that leadeth to destruction.

In taking leave of my readers, permit me to remind them, that whether we realize it or not, the acquaintance we have formed through the medium of this book, has brought with it obligations and responsibilities that will reach into eternity. At that tribunal before which we must all speedily appear, I shall have to render an account for the motives that influenced me to write this book—the spirit and feelings that have pervaded me while writing it—and the truth or falsehood, the scriptural or unscriptural sentiments that it contains. And at that

same tribunal, you, my beloved readers, will have to answer for the spirit with which you have read this work, and the influence it has exerted, and shall exert, upon your character and conduct. That what I have written may prove a means of edification to saints, and of conversion to at least one impenitent soul, may God grant, and to His name shall be the praise!





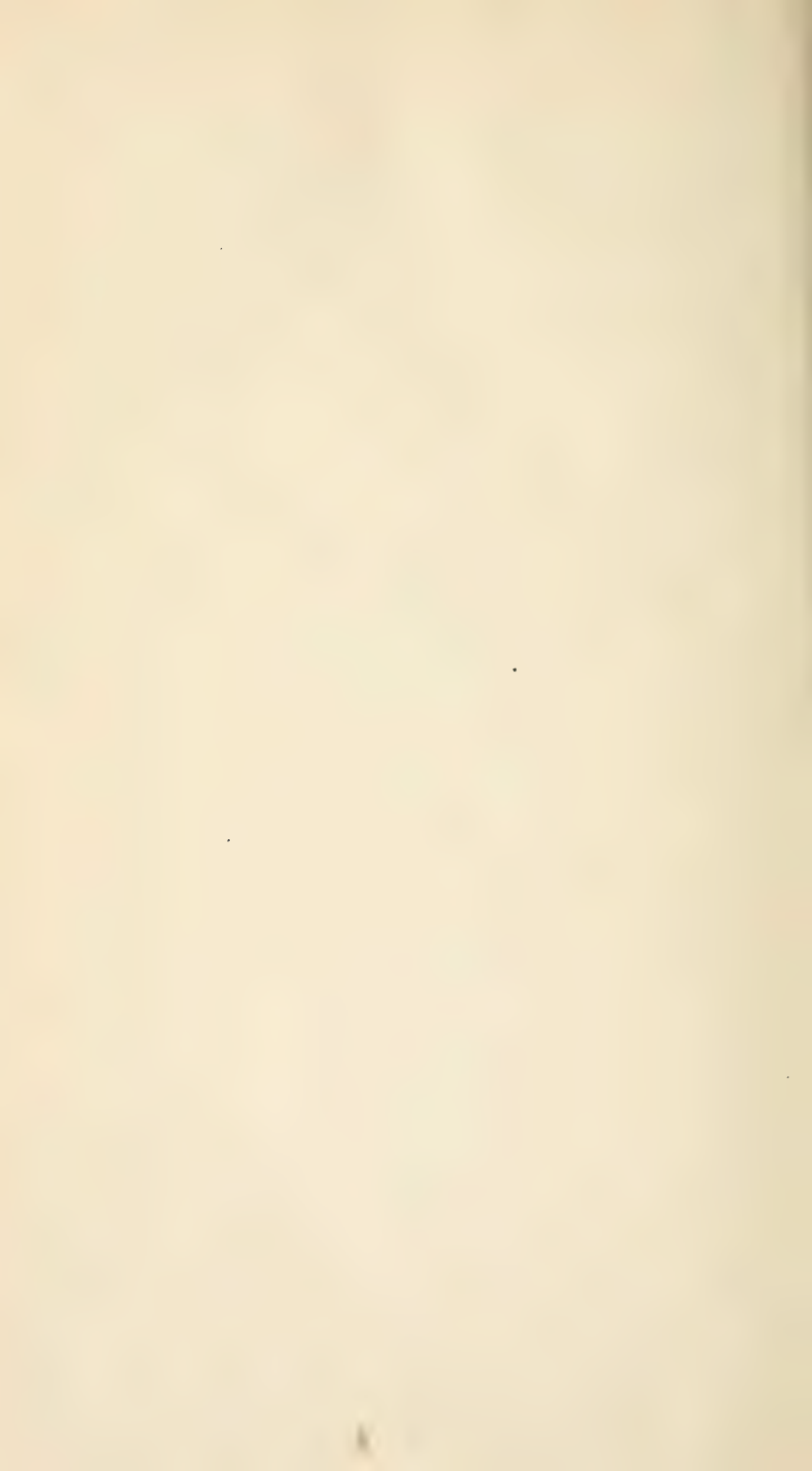
















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